

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Workers don't get trials  
like O.J. Simpson

— PAGE 4

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Mexico gov't unleashes austerity on workers

'Bailout' means high prices, massive layoffs

BY LAURA GARZA

The harsh austerity measures being implemented by the government of Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo have begun to devastate the lives of millions of workers and peasants.

The belt-tightening plan unveiled March 9 was warmly received by Clinton administration officials and Wall Street. "The stringent measures announced last night are a major step forward," said Robert Rubin, U.S. treasury secretary, "and we should recognize the political courage involved in taking those steps."

Stanley Fisher, speaking for the International Monetary Fund, said the agency welcomed "the substantive measures adopted by the Mexican authorities to strengthen their economic program." The peso's steady fall slowed, but the currency did not rise to projections set by the regime.

Aside from taking a big bite out of the working-class standard of living, the cut-backs have done little to reverse the flight of foreign capital, a central goal of the Mexican government and big business. In a March 10 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Zedillo's message to the newspaper's readers was, "Don't panic, please don't panic." The *Economist* remarked that despite the \$50 billion so-called bailout led by Washington, "far from staging a swift recovery, the patient seems to be sickening rapidly."

Resistance by working people and youth in city and countryside is beginning to rise in opposition to the consequences of Zedillo's deal with Washington and the continued occupation of the southern state of Chiapas by the Mexican army.

"I have been laid off since December," said Rubén García, one of thousands of people at a March 8 Mexico City demonstration calling for an end to the army oc-



Militant/Margrethe Siem

Thousands in Mexico City on March 8 called for withdrawal of army from Chiapas

cupation of Chiapas. García had been working at an auto parts store. "There are no sales. We have had crises before — I have been through two — but this is the worst," he said.

One day after Mexico's finance minister, Guillermo Ortiz, announced the austerity plan, the price of gasoline jumped 35 percent and electricity increases of 20 percent were projected. Annual inflation is

expected to reach at least 42 percent, while the government announced the minimum wage will be raised only 10 percent as of April 1. The government also plans to increase the value-added tax — a sales tax on virtually all goods that is added on at each stage of production and distribution — from 10 percent to 15 percent.

This follows steady price rises in basic  
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## Nebraska boss assists INS raid

BY RUTH NEBBIA

SCHUYLER, Nebraska — The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), in collusion with Excel Corp. management, raided the Excel beef packing-house here March 4, deporting more than 125 Latino workers. A reporting team for the *Militant* interviewed residents near the plant about the raid.

"They had us in the cafeteria like cattle ready to go through the shoot one by one to get slaughtered," said Casillas, a line supervisor at the plant.

Cynically dubbed "Operation Jobs" by federal officials, the INS said the raid on the plant was unprecedented because it was the first time a company in Nebraska had cooperated so fully with the immigration police to arrest its employees.

In exchange for the company's cooperation, Excel spokesman Mark Klein told the *Omaha World Herald*, the INS made it possible for the company to avoid a disruptive raid and hefty fines. The INS helped Excel hire eligible workers in preparation for the raid to avoid a loss in production. The INS also offered to help find legal residents to fill positions that would be vacated by arrests. March 6, the first day of production after the raid, 75 workers failed to show up for day shift.

Casillas described how the operation took place. The company had scheduled the second shift for Saturday work. First- and second-shift workers have been alter-

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## Join world campaign to sell 'Militant'

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Supporters of the socialist press are launching a campaign to win new readers to the *Militant*, its Spanish-language sister magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the Marxist magazine *New International*. The 10-week sales drive will begin April 1 and run through June 11.

"Every week events in world politics give workers and young people more reasons to read the socialist press," noted a letter sent out by the *Militant* to distributors around the world. "The crisis in Mexico, the collapse of Barings bank, escalating conflicts in the Balkans, resistance by metal workers in Germany, fights against attacks on the social wage from New York to Vancouver — the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are essential for getting regular coverage and analysis of these developments from a working-class standpoint."

That's why distributors around the world will aim to sign up 3,000 subscribers to the *Militant* and 700 to *Perspectiva Mundial* during the sales campaign. They also project selling 1,250 copies of the various issues of *New International* available in English, French, Spanish, and Swedish.

The sales effort builds on the smashing success of the just-completed international campaign to sell *New International* no. 10 and renewal subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Supporters sold  
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## Sinn Fein leader's U.S. tour angers London

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — Speaking at the start of his U.S. tour, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams called for the "decommissioning of British troops" in Northern Ireland and for the release of Irish political prisoners in United Kingdom jails. He said that the

British government should "stop making excuses and start making peace."

Adams was addressing a meeting of 200 people in New York City. During the tour, the Sinn Fein president will engage in fund-raising activities for the organization, and establish a Sinn Fein office in Washington, D.C.

He will have two opportunities to meet with U.S. president Bill Clinton, having been invited to attend — along with other political leaders from Northern Ireland — a St. Patrick's Day reception at the White House and another hosted by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

The U.S. administration's decision to invite Adams to high-profile events and to grant him a visa that allows the leader of the Republican movement to engage in fund-raising activities has angered the government of the United Kingdom. A UK government spokesperson said it was "bound to sour relations" between London and Washington.

Opposition to the U.S. administration's action is being publicly aired by government leaders here. At the start of a visit to Israel, British prime minister John Major made a thinly veiled attack on the U.S.

president. As the *Financial Times* put it, Major "implicitly criticised" Clinton by contrasting the stance of Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasser Arafat — who Major will meet — with that of the Sinn Fein president. "Chairman Arafat is now actively opposing terrorism," Major said. "I am afraid that Sinn Fein are still directly associated with a fully formed terrorist organisation."

UK government secretary of state for Northern Ireland Patrick Mayhew flew to the United States in an attempt to pressure Washington not to make the invitation. There he was told by Sen. Edward Kennedy, "It is completely inappropriate for British diplomats to interfere in American domestic politics on the question of Northern Ireland."

In a March 13 editorial, the *Financial Times* considered the meaning of the "snub to Britain delivered by the Clinton administration." Clinton "would not gratuitously alienate Britain if that involved a clear political cost," the influential daily commented. "In American eyes Britain has become only a marginal player in European politics....Of all the charges Mr

Continued on Page 14

### In London

### Defending Cuba, Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution

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Socialist candidate: 'Labor must lead fight for jobs' — page 10





## Nissan to cut 1,000 jobs

Bosses at Nissan plan to cut 1,000 jobs in a restructuring effort to reduce the auto manufacturer's huge debt. Media reports suggest Nissan may slash up to 20 percent of its 48,000 workers over the next three years. The closing of Nissan's assembly plant in Zama, set for March 31, will be the first shutdown of a Japanese auto plant since World War II. Workers at the Zama plant have produced 10 million cars since 1964.

Although Nissan shaved its debt by \$3.2 billion over the past two years, it still owes an estimated \$10 billion. *Wall Street Journal* financial writers recommend, "given Japan's weak demand for cars...the company has little choice but to keep cutting costs."

## Khmer Rouge advances on city

The Cambodian government rushed military troops to Battambang, the country's second-largest city recently to halt advancing Khmer Rouge forces. The move increased the number of government military and police forces in the Battambang region to 30,000. In a radio interview March 6, Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan declared that the defenders of Battambang would "die soon." Samphan still commands a force of 10,000. With defections in recent years and the loss of military aid from China the strength of the rightist Khmer Rouge forces, who were responsible for the slaughter of more than 1 million Cambodians, has declined according to press reports.

## IMF, Russia agree on loan terms

In an agreement heavy on conditions from the capitalist banks, the International Monetary Fund and the Russian government came to terms on a \$6.4 billion loan. The funds are to be disbursed in monthly increments over the coming year, in order to ensure that the Yeltsin regime is following IMF guidelines. The IMF insists that Moscow generate more revenue to stabilize its budget and end subsidized prices on many basic goods. The capitalist bankers also want the Russian government to begin opening the energy sector for private investment.

First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais called the capitalist bankers loan



Demonstrators rally in Marseilles, France, February 26 to protest the murder of Ibrahim Ali, a 17-year-old African immigrant. Ali was slain by supporters of ultrarightist presidential candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen, the National Front leader who proposes deporting 3 million immigrants to ease unemployment.

guarantee a "vote of confidence from major nations of the world."

## UNITA agrees to withdraw

After three weeks of talks between the Angolan government, UNITA forces, United Nations military commanders, and diplomats from Portugal, Russia, and the United States, Jonas Savimbi agreed "without conditions" to withdraw UNITA forces from the northern town of Uige. Wracked by internal divisions, the rightist forces under Savimbi had earlier refused to withdraw from the area by the agreed upon mid-February deadline. The United Nations now plans to deploy 7,000 troops as "peacekeepers" in Angola.

The southern African country won its independence from Portugal in 1975. A 19-year civil war has raged in Angola taking an estimated half-million lives there.

## Devaluation hurts W. Africa

The standard of living for working people in the 14 French-speaking countries of West Africa has dropped dramatically

since a 50 percent devaluation of the currency last year. The African Financial Community (CFA) franc, which is tied to the French franc, was devalued after persistent pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Michel Jancloes of the World Health Organization speaking to a UN-sponsored meeting recently stated that "no preparation at all" was made to deal with the social consequences of the devaluation and that officials knew of the likely disastrous effects beforehand. Social programs such as health care and access to schools have been hit hardest. Ninety percent of these nation's medicines are imported, causing medical costs to double. Nine of the 14 CFA countries are among the poorest in the world.

## Spain, Portugal currency drops

The Spanish peseta and the Portuguese escudo were devalued by 7 percent and 3.5 percent respectively March 6, concluding two weeks of tumultuous trading.

Spain requested an emergency meeting of the European Union to prevent its currency from slipping out of the currency grid of the exchange rate mechanism, which links certain European currencies together. Currently, the peseta is 12 percent below its assigned level on the currency grid. This the fourth devaluation for the peseta in three years and third for the escudo.

## Nuke waste to avoid protests

The environmental organization Greenpeace recently announced that the *Pacific Pintail*, which is carrying deadly nuclear waste from France to Japan, has diverted from its course and is heading south towards the equator between South America and Africa. This route, although longer

and more costly, will keep the ship away from potential protests in the Caribbean and Panama. Public protests have taken place in a number of Caribbean countries after it was announced that the ship might pass through on its way to the Panama Canal. The ship will avoid the Panama Canal by sailing around either Africa or South America.

## Waste storage plan derailed

The U.S. government's plans for storage of nuclear waste thousands of feet below Yucca Mountain in Nevada was set back when a scientist hypothesized that the storage facility might eventually explode and spread radioactivity into ground water and the atmosphere. Planning for the repository 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas began eight years ago and studies of its feasibility have so far cost more than \$1.7 billion.

Charles Bowman ignited the debate among nuclear physicist when he said that plutonium seepage into the rocky material could produce a nuclear blast equal to the force of 1,000 tons of high explosives. Government officials said the waste slated for Yucca Mountain will be stored above ground until the debate is settled.

## Orange County to cut 1,600 jobs

William Popejoy, new chief executive officer of Orange County, California, plans to eliminate 1,600 jobs, cut the budgets of libraries, and reduce mental health services in an effort to come out from under last year's bankruptcy. This is the first phase of a drastic plan to reduce services; sell assets, including libraries; and possibly raise taxes to ensure payment to the wealthy bondholders of the county's debt. The county faces an August 10 deadline to cover \$1 billion in bond debt. Popejoy says the county was about \$382 million short to pay that debt.

"There will be pain, people will lose jobs and many necessary county services will be cut," Popejoy said of his plan.

## New York adopts death penalty

Flanked by police officials, widows of slain cops, and others, New York governor George Pataki signed the death penalty back into law after 18 years off the books. New York has now become the 38th state to legalize capital punishment. Under the new law pregnant women and mentally retarded people will be exempted from the cruel and unusual punishment. But the mentally retarded can be executed if they commit murder while in prison. The state's highest court declared New York's last death penalty law unconstitutional in 1977. Former governor Mario Cuomo had vetoed 12 death penalty bills during successive administrations.

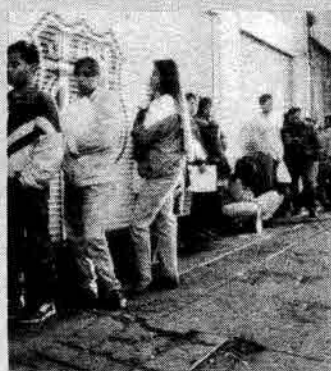
Meanwhile, the federal government has scheduled its first execution since 1963. On March 30 Washington plans to execute David Chandler by lethal injection at the federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana.

— DAMON TINNON

## THE MILITANT

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Editor: STEVE CLARK

Managing Editor: GEORGE FYSON

Business Manager: NAOMI CRAINE

Editorial Staff: Naomi Craine, Hilda Cuzco, Laura Garza, Martin Koppel, Paul Mailhot, Argiris Malapanis, Greg Rosenberg, Pat Smith, Damon Tinnon, and Maurice Williams.

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The Militant can be reached via CompuServe at: 73311.2720 or via Peacenet at: themilitant

Internet: 73311.2720@compuserve.com or: themilitant@igc.apc.org

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

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# Capitalist investments far from 'working wonders' as crisis shakes Argentina, Brazil

BY PAT SMITH

Three months ago U.S. president Bill Clinton boasted at the White House-organized "Summit of the Americas" that capitalist investments "are working wonders" in Latin America. Today, the economies of Argentina and Brazil are convulsing as tremors from the collapse of the Mexican peso continue to ripple southward and pillage the lives of workers and farmers throughout the continent.

This crisis is rooted in the economic uncertainty and political instability of world capitalism, which has been mired in depression conditions since the opening of the decade.

Capitalist investors have withdrawn an estimated \$3 billion from Argentina alone since the Mexican government devalued the peso in December, sending Argentine bonds tumbling and nearly halving the value of blue-chip stocks.

A credit crisis, which pushed short-term interbank interest rates up to 90 percent, has added to growing shakiness in the banking system. In recent weeks two banks were forced to close and paper manufacturer Alto Paraná had to default on \$60 million worth of maturing debt.

With capital flowing out of the country, Buenos Aires will be hard-pressed to obtain funds to cover the approximately \$9 billion due to the bondholders this year.

"We are all a little drunk from the Tequila effect," Argentine president Carlos Menem said. "I want to underline that we will take immediate measures" to slash government spending, Menem vowed, in

the hope of stemming the flow of capital away from Argentina.

In an effort to regain investor confidence, Argentine economy minister Domingo Cavallo announced plans February 27 for a \$3.3 billion belt-tightening package. The scheme includes cuts of 5 percent to 15 percent in the salaries of many government workers.

Congress has begun passing bills to impose caps on pension payments and scrap codes protecting labor. The proposed measures would reduce employers' contributions to social security and disability payments, as well as extend the probationary period in which a boss can fire a worker without having to pay compensation. Also being considered are a fuel tax and an increase in the regressive value-added tax.

The Argentine government began negotiations with the International Monetary Fund in early March for a \$2 billion loan, just 10 days after Cavallo bragged, "fortunately we do not need funding."

To shore up the banking system, Buenos Aires has now asked for a \$3 billion credit line from central banks in the major capitalist countries, bringing total aid requests to about \$6.7 billion.

The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank are expected to grant more than \$1 billion intended to support government plans to privatize state-run banks. Financial institutions have seen \$4.2 billion of deposits withdrawn in less than three months.

The banking problems have also jeopardized

the country's convertibility system, under which the peso is traded one-for-one to the U.S. dollar and each peso in circulation is backed by a dollar in reserves. By the first week in March, Buenos Aires had dumped all but \$200 million of the reserve fund in an attempt to preserve failing banks.

In an interview last year, Argentine journalist Luis Bilbao told the *Militant*, "Imperialist demands for payment on the \$58 billion foreign debt have been used as the pretext for the sale by Menem of state-owned companies and cuts in social spending." Since 1989, the government has sold off most of the state-owned enterprises to local entrepreneurs or capitalists from abroad, including those in electric energy, oil, gas, steel production, airlines, rail, and telecommunications.

Hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs after the government sold off state-run industries. On the railroads, for example, a workforce of 100,000 has been slashed to 10,000. In January official unemployment hit a record 12.2 percent. "The government makes these big economic changes that look good on paper, but it doesn't think about what impact they will have on the average person," said Adolfo Grassi, a 42-year-old machinist who worked for the railroad for 20 years and has not found steady work since being laid off in 1992.

The Menem government has shifted much of the responsibility for austerity measures, including layoffs, pay reductions, and cuts in social programs, onto

provincial authorities. Thousands of workers in one of the most impoverished provinces in northern Argentina, Santiago del Estero, seized and burned the provincial government building in December 1993 and protested in the following weeks to demand back wages.

The Menem regime is also trying to smooth over outrage in the wake of new revelations about Argentina's "dirty war." At least 4,000 people were killed and 10,000 "disappeared" during military rule from 1976 to 1983.

## Revelations spur outrage

In an interview with the newspaper *Página 12* earlier this month, Adolfo Francisco Scilingo, a retired navy commander, became the first officer to lift the lid on government-sponsored murder during those years.

Scilingo reported that the Argentine navy conducted flights over the Atlantic from which prisoners, still alive, were dropped into the ocean. By his estimate, between 1,500 and 2,000 people were executed in this fashion.

Many victims, weak from torture, had to be helped aboard the planes. Once in flight, they were injected with sedatives before being stripped and thrown to their deaths.

Menem, seeking to contain the political fallout, called Scilingo a criminal and ordered the navy to strip the officer of his rank as a result of a conviction for fraud in 1991. But the Argentine president defended his earlier decision to grant broad pardons to military officers and others accused of mounting the dirty war.

## Brazil currency, markets shaken

Meanwhile, in an attempt to stave off a Mexico-style crash, the government of Brazil introduced a two-stage devaluation of its currency, the real, March 6. The administration of president Fernando Cardoso also announced other measures to reassure investors, including the possible sell-off of Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, the world's largest iron ore exporter. "The Mexican crisis serves as an alert on the necessity of the structural reforms that give sustenance to a strong currency," Cardoso said.

Like the Argentine rulers, Cardoso will use the crisis in Mexico and wild swings in Brazilian stock and currency markets as an excuse to tighten workers' belts one more notch and restructure state-owned industries. The government passed legislation in mid-February to open Brazil's petroleum, mining, and telecommunications industries to private investment, including capital from abroad.

Brazil's central bank announced it was instituting a system of "floating bands" against the dollar March 6. Until May 1, the real was to fluctuate between 86 and 90 centavos to the dollar. On May 2, the band is scheduled to widen to between 86 and 98 centavos, implying a devaluation of up to 15 percent. The devaluation sent the São Paulo stock exchange for a 28 percent nosedive in one week. The central bank intervened 32 times March 9 trying to prop up the currency.

The bank announced a new, wider band the following day and the real stabilized at 7 percent down against the dollar for the week. The stock market also rebounded close to its spot a week earlier, regaining 26 percent.

Brazil has one of the world's largest disparities of income between rich and poor. Some 12.3 million people out of a population of 158 million earn less than the minimum wage of \$71 a month. More than 5 million people work without receiving cash wages and approximately 18 million are unemployed. Some 23 million farmers are landless.

Workers have responded to these crisis conditions with some fightbacks. Last September, for example, 9,000 metal workers struck General Motors and other plants in São Paulo demanding wage hikes. In an effort to prevent new resistance, Cardoso approved a rise in the monthly minimum wage March 9 from 70 to 100 reals. He had vetoed the pay hike a few weeks earlier.

# German metal workers score victory

BY DAMON TINNON

Metal workers in Germany scored a victory in their recently concluded strike against Gesamtmetall, the employers' federation. After two months in stalemated negotiations, 20,000 members of IG Metall, the engineering trade union, struck factories in the German state of Bavaria. They won wage gains and retained a shortened workweek that the employers had wanted to take away. The outcome of the 12-day strike disappointed other industrial capitalists in Germany, since the IG Metall agreement will be used by unions to help set a benchmark in negotiations.

IG Metall organizes 3 million workers nationwide. The union's demands centered on a 6 percent wage increase and retaining a previously agreed upon cut in the workweek by one hour to 35 hours — with no cut in pay.

Strikers in Bavaria, whose number increased over the course of the selective strike, won a two-year agreement, which includes a one-time lump-sum payment of more than \$400, a 3.4 percent pay increase from May 1, 1995, to Oct. 31, 1995, and another 3.6 percent increase from November 1995 to December 1996. The agreement also retains the 35-hour workweek with no cut in pay.

The industrial bosses and their financial backers had other expectations. Gesamtmetall approached the negotiations calling for not more than a 3 percent wage increase and more "flexibility" in work schedules. The employers particularly wanted to scrap the shortened workweek in the name of increasing productivity.

"The wage settlement in the German engineering sector is doubly disappointing," lamented the *Financial Times*. "The only positive aspect of the settlement is that it covers 1996 as well, so the ritualized agonies of negotiations and strikes will be avoided this time next year."

The agreement, which contains none of the "cost reduction" measures capitalists were clamoring for leading up to the strike, limits what the bosses can do in re-



Striking members of IG Metall in Munich, Bavaria, won a wage increase and maintained a previously agreed 35-hour workweek through their 12-day strike. German industrialists were disappointed because bosses did not win major concessions from workers.

lution to work flexibility.

Prior to the walkout, German finance minister Theo Waigel declared an engineering strike would be "poison" to the economy. With the end of the recession and profits up sharply, the German capitalists fear IG Metall's action will set the standard for workers' demands in other industries. This will set back their plans to speedup production and downsize industry in an attempt to match their chief rivals, especially manufacturers in the United States.

Eighty-eight percent of the 165,000 union members in Bavaria voted in favor of the walkout. Very few workers tried to cross the picket lines. In fact, one worker who climbed a fence to get into a factory was sent home by the management. The strike won broad backing from other workers in Germany. Some 33,000 union members held work stoppages in solidarity with IG Metall picket lines. Twenty thousand workers at the Mercedes-Benz auto assembly plant in Stuttgart walked out to show their support.

This solidarity was one of the most unsettling results for the employers. Other large unions, such as the IG Bau construction workers union, which has 1.1 million members, made declarations of solidarity with the metal workers. IG Bau official, Bruno Köbele, commented, "This compromise is a good starting point for our own wage negotiations."

The *Financial Times* warned, "This deal is likely to hearten several of Germany's major unions which are also seeking around 6 per cent."

Other large unions like IG Chemie, the chemical workers union, began negotiations the day following IG Metall's settlement. IG Chemie is calling for a 6 percent wage increase, which would effect 630,000 workers. The öTV public sector union and the construction workers unions are also calling for pay increases of at least 6 percent. "The reaction at many companies — which have had a hard time in recent years — will be, 'What can I do to reduce my costs further?'" said one employers representative.



# The death penalty: weapon of class intimidation

With this issue, the *Militant* begins a new column written by framed-up political and trade union activist Mark Curtis. "From behind prison walls" will appear regularly. To correspond with Curtis, write to him at #805338, Iowa State Penitentiary, Box 316, Fort Madison, Iowa, 52627.

FT. MADISON, Iowa — By a vote of 39 to 11, the Iowa Senate recently defeated a bill to reestablish the death penalty.



Mark  
Curtis

While the vote appears to buck the national trend — only 12 states prohibit the death penalty now — the debate around capital punishment reflects the political polarization going on everywhere today.

While the great majority were silent during the debate, the defeat of the death penalty here reflects the fact that there is more opposition to the measure among workers and farmers than capitalist pundits like to admit.

During his long administration, Iowa governor Terry Branstad has periodically called for a new capital punishment law. This was especially the case during his

1994 re-election run. His Democratic Party opponent voiced half-hearted objections.

At the same time, a whole number of other laws have been passed here that call for longer sentences, harsher conditions in prison, and greater powers for the cops and courts — all at the expense of the accused.

Demagoguery is common around the death-penalty issue. The capitalist economic and social crisis plaguing the world gets reduced to scapegoating those accused of small-time crimes for the "moral breakdown" that's supposed to be the cause of society's ills. Get tougher with the barbarians, they say, and stop things from falling apart. Crimes on a mass scale by the ruling families are ignored. For example, a recent television program pointed to the fact that there were 100,000 industrial deaths in 1994.

Without an independent perspective being presented by the labor movement, demagoguery by capitalist spokespeople gets a hearing among many. Even so, working people are sensitive to the loss of democratic freedoms. The bill first introduced in the Iowa legislature limited the death penalty application to a rapist or kidnapper who kills their victim, or to an inmate who kills a guard or another prisoner. Lethal injections, supposedly more "humane" than the gallows Iowa tore down in 1965 when capital punishment was banned, was supposed to be the designated method.

Even though the bill passed the House, it ran into trouble. According to the *Des Moines Register*, "Hundreds of farmers, priests, doctors, bankers, and others

jammed the phone lines at the statehouse on Wednesday as lawmakers debated whether Iowa should reinstitute the death penalty. They are getting strong 'no' calls, said a switchboard operator."

Although a few small vigils took place, no mass protests against the measure were organized. The labor movement stayed on the sidelines. Instead, it was left to a few church leaders and some youth to carry the ball. This meant practically that the only anti-execution voices heard were those of liberal capitalist politicians. Most of their arguments are false, unconvincing, and lead to a losing strategy.

One such argument is that the death penalty costs too much money. Prosecutor training, legal appeals by death row inmates, death row security, and the execution itself, supposedly result in higher costs than keeping an inmate in jail for a life sentence.

Attempting to make this a dollars-and-cents issue is easily torn apart as new federal crime guidelines are established. These laws limit appeals by inmates. The result will be more multiple execution parties where state authorities kill two or three or more inmates in a night.

You often hear "life in prison" is worse than the death penalty, or "execution is too good for him." These arguments are very unpopular here in the Iowa State Penitentiary.

Prisoners themselves are affected by the "anti-crime" campaign. The latest issue of the "Bars and Stripes" newsletter contains an article by an inmate at the Nebraska State Penitentiary describing what happened there after the execution last summer of Willie Otey, the first to fall victim

to that state's reinstitution of the death penalty.

"The day after the execution was a day unlike any I've seen here. Some prisoners tried to start a freedom walk around the outdoors basketball court, but that was quickly dispersed by the guards. Others were seen hugging each other (yes, grown men in tears over the death of a friend). But some were like the frenzied crowd that gathered outside the prison to witness the deadly deed. They were celebrating."

There are lifers here who were first incarcerated in the 1950s. One of them, an old man now, told me about the last executions here in the early 1960s. They were held at midnight and all the inmates were locked in their cells. Meals were always good on execution days, he said. Most vivid is his memory of the last meal requested by a condemned man: a single olive, a kind of protest statement through the only means available.

The gallows and the syringe are lethal weapons the government and the ruling families use to intimidate and discipline workers and farmers. They have used this class weapon against trade unionists, revolutionaries, communists, anarchists, and others.

In the coming years, the fight against the death penalty will be a life and death question for the working class, not as an abstract moral question, but as part of the right to defend our rights and our unions, our working-class leadership, and the victims of frame-ups. The death penalty is a weapon that is part and parcel of the whole repressive machinery of the cops and courts created to protect the ruling families' exploitation of labor.

## Workers don't receive trials like O.J. Simpson

BY NORTON SANDLER

DES MOINES, Iowa. — Turning on a television set these days it's hard to avoid the O.J. Simpson trial. News announcers, talk show hosts, and a bevy of "legal experts" dissect courtroom events and every bit of trivia associated with the Simpson case.

One intended impression of this grand show is that defendants — even those that seem to be guilty — get a "fair shake" in the U.S. justice system.

### AS I SEE IT

Simpson, with millions of dollars to pour into a high-powered legal team of prominent lawyers and a small army of investigators, is receiving a trial that stands in stark contrast to what most of those in prison today faced when they had "their day in court."

Supporters of union and political activist Mark Curtis cannot help but contrast his 1988 frame-up trial to the Simpson case. Curtis, 36, is into his sixth year of a 25-year sentence at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Ft. Madison.

He was arrested, beaten by the cops, and framed up after participating in a public action to defend 17 co-workers from Mexico and El Salvador who were seized in an immigration raid at the Monfort meatpacking plant in Des Moines.

As Curtis supporters geared up for a fight to demand his release on parole last August, he was falsely charged by prison authorities with assaulting another inmate. Sentenced in an internal prison hearing, he was punished with 13 months of punitive lock-up in a segregation unit. The testimony against him came solely from prison guards. Curtis is held in a five-foot by seven-foot cell 23 hours a day. He is allowed an hour of daily exercise in a small pen, and three 10-minute showers a week. He is taken to the visitors room and to the shower in chains.

Curtis was charged in 1988 by the Des Moines cops with the rape of a teenage Black girl. At his arraignment several

weeks later, the rape charge was reduced to third-degree sexual assault, but a first-degree burglary charge for being in the house where the alleged rape took place was tacked on — a charge that carries a mandatory 25-year sentence. As he has served out the sexual-assault sentence, Curtis is now being held in jail on the basis of the burglary charge.

#### Do cops fabricate evidence?

The testimony of the cops was central to the Curtis trial, as it is in the Simpson case. At issue is whether cops fabricate evidence.

Prosecutors in Simpson's trial claim that Los Angeles police detective Mark Fuhrman found blood on the door of Simpson's parked Ford Bronco and a bloody glove in a walkway at Simpson's estate — similar to a glove found at the scene of the brutal murders of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. Simpson's lawyers are claiming that Fuhrman planted the glove and that the cop is a racist with a special hatred for interracial couples.

While Simpson's defense team is not being given access to everything in Fuhrman's police file, Judge Lance Ito has permitted the defense, over prosecution objections, to use a section of it to impeach the cops testimony. Ito is also allowing wide latitude during cross-examination to find out if Fuhrman has ever made racist remarks about Blacks and interracial couples.

Contrast this with what was allowed in Curtis's case, in which the judge excluded virtually everything about the records of the cops who testified against him.

Officer Joseph Gonzalez, who arrested Curtis, was the key witness against him. Gonzalez told the jury that he found Curtis with his pants down in the young woman's house.

Curtis explained to the jury that he had driven a woman to the house where he was arrested after she had stopped him at an intersection and pleaded for help. The woman asked him to wait on the porch to make sure everything was all right. He never saw that woman again.

Within minutes, Curtis explained, Gon-



Militant/Phil Norris

Union activist Mark Curtis distributes the *Militant* newspaper to striking packing-house workers and supporters at a 1987 rally in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

zalez entered the house, grabbed him, dragged him into the bedroom, handcuffed him, and pulled down his pants. Gonzalez took his wallet and car keys.

Curtis had a leaflet in his car publicizing an upcoming rally in support of the Socialist Workers Party's victory in its lawsuit against the FBI. The leaflet was headlined, "Stop Government Attacks on Political Rights." If the cops didn't already know who he was, once they searched the car and found this leaflet, they knew Mark Curtis was a political activist.

#### Frame-up of political activist

Curtis was taken to a room in the police station where cops began to grill him. Demonstrating their knowledge of and hatred for Curtis's political activities, one cop called him "a Mexican-lover, just like you love those coloreds." After Curtis refused to answer their questions, the cops grabbed him in a chokehold and beat him severely, shattering his cheek bone.

Before the trial, Curtis's attorneys requested access to Gonzalez's file. Their

request was flatly denied. Curtis supporters went to the archives of the *Des Moines Register*, the local paper, and combed through years of microfilm looking for public references to Gonzalez. They discovered that he had previously been suspended from the force for lying and manufacturing evidence.

At the trial, the judge again denied Curtis's attorneys Gonzalez's records, and prohibited them from cross examining Gonzalez about his previous suspension by the Des Moines cops, a fact that could have significant bearing on whether the jury believed him.

Furthermore, Curtis was prevented from telling the jury that he was beaten by the cops, or that they called him "a Mexican lover."

At one point in the trial, the prosecutor badgered Curtis, demanding to know why he hadn't returned to work after his arrest. The judge wouldn't let Curtis answer that he was medically excused from work because of the injuries he received at the

Continued on Page 12



# Clinic defender near Boston assaulted by antiabortion thug

BY SARAH ULLMAN

BROOKLINE, Massachusetts — The first face-off between pro-choice and anti-abortion forces in the Boston area since a murderous assault December 30, which left two clinic workers dead and five other people wounded, took place here March 11 at the Planned Parenthood clinic.

After a three-hour confrontation, when everyone was drifting away, a member of Our Lady's Crusaders for Life smashed a pro-choice nurse in the mouth with his metal cane, bloodying her mouth and breaking some of her teeth. The assailant, Charles Swain, says he acted in self-defense, claiming Connie Arseneault poured coffee on his leaflets. Arseneault said she was cleaning up some scattered coffee cups and tossed one with a little cold coffee left in it into an old box on the sidewalk that she thought was trash. Suddenly, without a word, Swain struck her. The blow was so hard that one broken piece of tooth was driven into the nurse's gum; she will need oral surgery.

The police at first refused to arrest Swain, questioning Arseneault on what she had done to provoke him. After a time the cops relented, arrested Swain, and charged him with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon. At his March 13 arraignment in municipal court, the judge set a hearing for April 4 and released Swain on condition that he stay away from Arseneault, and at least 100 yards away from the four clinics in Brookline and adjacent Boston, as well as from every other abortion clinic in Massachusetts.

Public outrage at the December 30 killings put antiabortion forces on the defensive. John Salvi, an ultra-rightist who had participated in protests at these clinics, was charged in the murders.

Bernard Cardinal Law of the Boston Catholic Archdiocese called for a moratorium on all actions in front of the clinics, offering a designated church for organized antiabortion prayer meetings instead. But soon the abortion rights opponents were back with their Saturday morning "sidewalk counseling" — shouting abuse at patients and thrusting magnified color photos of aborted fetuses in their faces.

Our Lady's Crusaders for Life, with support from Operation Rescue and other rightists, has held monthly demonstrations outside local clinics for four years and respected the Cardinal's moratorium only once, in January. This time they mobilized close to 100 people to march down the block and gather just off the sidewalk in

front of the clinic, where they set up a small stage, a microphone, and speakers to amplify their antiabortion call.

Pro-choice groups decided not to let them claim the space unchallenged, and some 50-60 answered them with vigorous chants such as, "First you murder, then you pray; righteous bigots: go away!"

Pro-choice activists remain determined to defend the right of women to choose abortion, to defend the clinics' right to provide safe medical services, and to denounce the campaign of threats and terror by those who would deny them that right. This determination, however, has been dampened by the public opposition of Planned Parenthood officials to the presence of either side in front of the clinic.

The Boston chapter of the National Organization for Women has organized a meeting to discuss how best to respond to the next anti-abortion-rights actions as well as the regular Saturday harassment.

Following the arraignment, Arseneault set an inspiring example when she stood outside the courthouse, not 20 feet from her unapologetic assailant, and said, "This brutal assault on me by this supposedly 'pro-life' person has been a tremendous shock, but I just want to say to everyone: we need to be more visible, we need to not be intimidated by their tactics. I will be on the line! Every woman in this world needs to know we will stand as a group for what we believe. We believe in choice!"



Militant/Barbara Graham

February rally against clinic murders

## Support growing for April 9 D.C. rally for women's rights

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Hundreds of organizations and prominent individuals have joined the National Organization for Women (NOW) in sponsoring a rally under the theme "Mobilize for Women's Lives!" on April 9 at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The rally will demand: stop all violence against women, stop anti-abortion violence, stop the war on poor women, stop the Contract on America.

The rally comes in the wake of new attacks on abortion clinics in recent months. This includes the recent killing of two workers and shooting of five others in the Boston area and arson attacks on several clinics in California last month. The continued assaults on abortion rights are taking place as the Democratic and Republican parties gear up their campaign to cut spending for education, health care, and other social programs.

On a recent Thursday evening this reporter joined a dozen volunteers, mostly young women, who staffed phones calling hundreds of NOW members in the area to organize leaflet distribution to publicize the April 9 rally at the 86 metro stops in the region. During a break in the phone calling, volunteers discussed the positive response we were getting to the idea of

mobilizing to stand up for women's rights and defend the right to abortion.

Kyle Velte, one of two campus organizers for NOW, recently returned from a 16-campus tour in New York state. "The response was overwhelmingly positive," she said. "Each of these campuses is organizing to send students. The estimate of how many are coming grew between the time we arrived on each campus and the time we left!" She said NOW has sent a mailing to 2,000 campuses.

In Philadelphia on March 15, 70 people gathered for a rally at city hall to speak out against attacks at abortion clinics and to oppose health-care and social service cuts. Speakers urged participation in the April 9 event and flyers were passed out.

NOW is publicizing two related events in the capital in conjunction with the national rally. A two-day Young Feminist conference will take place April 7-8. There will also be a display of the Clothesline Project — an exhibit of 6,000 T-shirts that highlight the plight of battered women. For more information call the NOW office in Washington, D.C., at (202) 331-0066.

Bob Stanton of Philadelphia contributed to this article.

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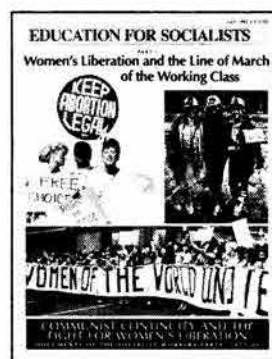
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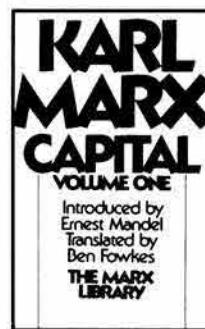
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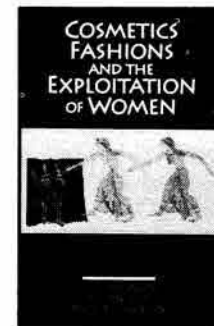


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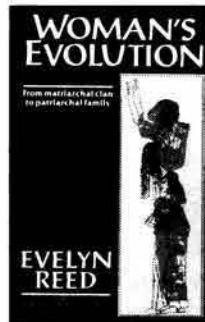


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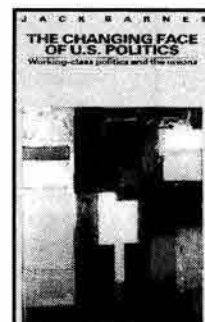
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# Students and auto workers greet Cuba youth in Minnesota

BY LISA ROTTACH

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — Cuban youth leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano spoke to more than 350 workers and students in Minnesota during the initial leg of their speaking tour of the United States. The tour, organized by the Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lecture Tour Committee, will include visits to more than a dozen different cities between March 6 and April 24.

The young Cubans are both researchers for the Center for Studies of Youth in Havana. Polanco, 28, is also a leader of the Union of Young Communists, and Serrano, 21, is a leader of the Federation of University Students.

Early in their visit the two were able to see first hand the functioning of capitalist industry. During a tour of the Ford auto assembly plant here, they met workers on the line who described their roles in production. Serrano and Polanco were struck by the monotony of the work and forced overtime of 10-hour days. "It is incredible what is expected of the workers, and for all that labor, the rich pocket almost everything," said Polanco. "We read in our books about these things, the kind of exploitation workers suffer under capitalism, but to see it is to really understand it."

Polanco explained that despite the pressure to continue working on the production line, Ford workers were friendly to the two Cubans. "They talked with us while they worked," he said.

## Unions in Cuba

Later in the week they continued the discussion with five Ford workers at a restaurant across the street from the factory. Tony Quevedo asked why unions are necessary in Cuba if workers control the government. Polanco answered, "It's necessary to have a mass organization that defends workers' rights as we continue the fight to establish a communist society." He pointed to the recent workers assemblies that have debated how to meet problems of production and the national economy as a specific example of workers' power in Cuba. He also noted that workers get one month of paid vacation each year and have many rights under the National Code of Labor.

Another auto worker, Arnaldo Rivas, a Cuban who immigrated to the United States 15 years ago, described the measures the bosses and government in the United States use to divide workers so they can't unite in common struggle. "Why should I hate you because you're

white, or Black, or female? When I first came to this country, they wanted me to categorize myself. I said 'I'm Cuban.' But they made me define my race as 'Black.' In Cuba, we're all Cubans, not different races based on color."

The Cuban youths also met with a representative of Sen. Paul Wellstone, who opposes the U.S. embargo against Cuba. Wellstone had publicly denounced the refusal by the U.S. State Department to grant Cuban youth leader Pável Diaz Hernandez a visa for a similar speaking tour organized by the lectures committee last year. The visa was subsequently granted.

During a meeting at the American Indian Center with Joe Allen, editor of *The Circle*, a Native American newspaper, the Cubans asked about the struggle for Indian rights, conditions on the reservations, and actions around the quincentennial of the colonization of the Americas.

"The revolution freed people up to practice their religions and cultures," said Polanco. "Unfortunately, we are unable to claim indigenous blood in our Cuban heritage because the native population was completely exterminated under colonialism."

## 'Solidarity with your struggle'

At the American Indian Opportunities Industrial Center, the Cubans paid an impromptu visit to a mathematics class of 15 Native American youth. "The Cuban revolution aligns itself to any struggle of oppressed peoples," said Serrano. "We want to show our solidarity with your struggle for freedom." One of the students described the Indian reservations as Third World within the first world. Other students asked questions about drug use, prisons, the death penalty, and agriculture in Cuba.



Militant/Jon Hillson

Kenia Serrano and Rogelio Polanco (center) talk with a student at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. The two spoke at six campuses while in Minnesota.

In response to a question about Chiapas, Mexico, Serrano replied that "Cuba is the only country in Latin America where the workers are the owners of their country, where we determine our own destiny. We are the only truly independent country in Latin America. But Chiapas proves that the people of Latin America are not passive about their oppression." Ten of the math students later signed up for more information on activities in defense of the Cuban revolution.

A public reception March 10 drew more than 40 people. Present were students, professors, and unionists, as well as members of La Raza Student Cultural Center, the Resource Center of the Americas, Pastors for Peace, and others who work in solidarity with Cuba. In remarks to the activists, Polanco saluted the organizers of the tour. "This work is important for us, to defend our country," he said. "It has a big impact for us, as part of the Cuba solidarity movement." For himself, Serrano, "and for all of us who come here to the United States, this work is important in our formation as revolutionaries."

Ryan Kelly, who participated in a January trip to Cuba with the International Youth Brigade, described the brigade's plans to help build upcoming educational activities in solidarity with Cuba called by the National Network on Cuba, a coalition of 69 organizations working in opposition to U.S. policy toward the Caribbean country.

The young Cubans answered a broad range of questions during talks at six different Minnesota campuses. Some students asked what would happen to the revolution after the presidency of Fidel Castro. "Fidel is human, and, like all humans, one day he will die," answered Serrano. "But the ideas of the revolution will continue to be defended by the millions of Cubans who have been building socialism for the past 36 years. The Cuban revolution is not the will of one man, but the deeds of millions."

Polanco and Serrano also reached thousands of radio listeners through two interviews, one of them on Minnesota Public Radio's broadcast of "All Things Considered."

## 'Nueva Internacional' is hot off the press

BY HILDA CUZCO

A new issue of the Marxist magazine *Nueva Internacional* is off the press, offering many opportunities to reach out to Spanish-speaking readers with socialist ideas. The publication of *Nueva Internacional* no. 4 follows a successful international campaign to sell more than 1,500 copies of *New International* no. 10, with the same contents in English.

The economic and political crisis shaking the rulers in Mexico and their stepped-up austerity drive against the Mexican workers and peasants are being discussed in the news and among workers around the world today. The articles in *Nueva Internacional* no. 4 — "What the 1987 stock market crash foretold," "Imperialism's march toward fascism and war," and "Defending Cuba, defending Cuba's socialist revolution" — explain the dynamics of the capitalist catastrophe unfolding today and help to understand why a communist perspective is necessary to fight for a new society in the interests of the working class all over the world.

A team of 17 volunteers across the country helped with the translation, editing, and copyediting of the articles in the new magazine, which is distributed by Pathfinder Press. Among them are workers in the garment, meatpacking, steel, and auto industries.

## Interest at Mexico City book fair

Thousands of people, many of them students, packed the XVI International Book Fair in Mexico City. Craig Honts, one of Pathfinder's sales representatives at the fair, reported that the political situation in Mexico prompted many readers to think more deeply about the world crisis of capitalism and how to resist its effects — questions taken up in various issues of *Nueva Internacional* and *New International*. Contrary to the claim put forward by capitalist politicians and the big-business press that there is a problem just in Mexico, many at the book fair agreed that it is part of a worldwide crisis of the

capitalist system. A total of 23 copies of *New International* were sold at the event. Honts said that despite the almost daily decline in the value of the peso during the book fair, the Pathfinder booth also sold out of titles by Ernesto Che Guevara on Cuba, *Habla Malcolm X* (Malcolm X speaks), and others.

## 'I have to read this book'

In an early morning plant-gate sale at Quality Braid garment shop in New York, supporters of the Socialist Workers candidate for state assembly Brock Satter, who works there, reported the interest of workers in political discussions. The attractive campaign table with a broad range of literature in Spanish and English prompted a good number of workers to stop despite the cold weather.

One worker told Duane Stillwell, a campaign supporter, that he had earlier bought *Habla Malcolm X*. He said he liked it very much and wanted to read *Nueva Internacional* no. 4. "I know, imperialism is going to start more wars, because of the economy. I have to read this book. I'm going to buy it from Bob this week or next," he added.

Bob Cantrick, a socialist campaign supporter who also works there, reported that some of his co-workers plan to pay for the magazine in two installments. Two workers at this plant already subscribe to the Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Jorge Ledesma, a campaign supporter who works in another garment shop, said three of his co-workers purchased the Marxist magazine. A co-worker from Ecuador who subscribes to the *Militant* had discussed with him the Ecuador-Peru conflict, saying that "the governments are the ones who are fighting." As soon as *Nueva Internacional* no. 4 got off the press she bought it and expressed interest in participating in classes along with other co-workers to discuss some of the articles in the magazine.

Distributors in New York also called

*Perspectiva Mundial* readers to invite them to the Militant Labor Forum series and let them know about the new issue of *Nueva Internacional*. Paco Sánchez reported that a reader from the Dominican Republic told him over the phone she would definitely get *Nueva Internacional*, as all the topics were important to read especially on the crisis of capitalism and the defense of the Cuban revolution. She ran into a Pathfinder literature table at a political event that evening and bought *Nueva Internacional* right away.

Distributors of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* nationwide are discussing how to use this new political weapon to reach out to new readers at actions taking place in defense of immigrant rights, abortion rights, and industrial unions; student protests; and demonstrations against police brutality. Efforts to get *Nueva Internacional* no. 4 into the hands of new readers and *Perspectiva Mundial* subscribers will be part of the upcoming international campaign to sell the socialist press.

## Nueva Internacional no. 4



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## U.S. Tour Schedule for Cuban Youth Leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano

San Francisco, March 15-17  
Houston, March 19-21  
Atlanta, March 23-24  
Greensboro-Chapel Hill, NC, March 27  
Philadelphia, March 29-30  
New York, March 31-April 1  
Newark, NJ, April 3-4  
Washington, D.C., April 5-8  
Boston, April 10-12  
Chicago and Illinois, April 14-18  
Miami, April 23

For more information, write the Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lectures Committee, Latin American Studies, 214 Social Sciences Tower, 267 19th Ave., S., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 or call (612) 624-1512 or fax (612) 626-2242.



# 'This is a victory for travel to Cuba'

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

CHICAGO — Some 35 people attended a victory celebration here March 4 for three youth who had their passports returned from the government.

Sukul Baul, 21; Dannen Vance, 27; and Aislinn Pulley, 16, had their passports seized by U.S. Customs agents at O'Hare airport when they returned from a visit to Cuba in January. They were part of a trip organized by the International Youth Brigade. Each of them was on editorial assignment to write first-hand reports on conditions in Cuba.

Five weeks later, following a protest campaign against the seizures, the young people received their passports back with a letter from William Wharton, director of passport policy and advisory services for the U.S. Department of State. Wharton wrote that the passports were "herewith returned since there was no violation of a passport restriction." He added, however, that the documents were "taken up by the Customs Service with other evidence of travel to Cuba in contravention" of the Trading with the Enemy Act and so-called Cuban Democracy Act. The three brigade participants have written to Secretary of State Warren Christopher refuting this charge.

Reflecting on his experience over the past month, Vance told the Chicago meeting, "I didn't realize how much support

was out there. All told, over 70 protest letters were sent to the State Department. They came from religious organizations, trade unionists, professionals, students, and elected politicians." Vance read a letter he received from Iowa senator Tom Harkin, who had asked the U.S. Customs Office to return his passport.

Baul reported that the three brigadistas had now spoken together on the same platform five times and had traveled to three states. Baul plans to continue speaking about his experiences in Cuba. He is scheduled to address three classes at Illinois State University in Bloomington in April. In addition, Baul said, he is eager to help organize the upcoming tour of two Cuban youth, sponsored by the Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lecture Committee based at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

Pulley read a letter from Chicago civil rights attorney Jim Strnal. "Congratulations on the return of your passports. I commend you for your courage in the face of attempted intimidation," Strnal wrote. "The seizure of your passports and the resulting protest campaign illustrate...that a quick, broadly based response can often be quite effective in turning back attacks on our basic democratic rights."

Pulley said she received a lot of support from students at her high school, Lane Tech, which is the largest in Illinois. She



Militant/Sukul Baul

International Youth Brigade members interview Cuban sugar mill workers

emphasized the importance of speaking out publicly against what the government had done. "This is a victory for those who want to travel to Cuba or anywhere else in the world," she said.

Like the others, Pulley said she would continue speaking in defense of the Cuban revolution. She encouraged everyone to help build an upcoming regional meeting in Chicago April 8, which is part of a month of activities to "Tell the Truth About Cuba." These activities and the meeting were called by the National Network on Cuba and will be hosted by the Chicago Cuba Coalition. The goal is to build a demonstration against U.S. government policies toward Cuba in the fall.

A collection of \$74 was taken at the meeting to help cover legal expenses of the defense campaign. This brings the total raised in the Midwest to a little more than \$1,000.

## Protest letter to U.S. Secretary of State

The following is a response to Secretary of State Warren Christopher by Sukul Baul, Aislinn Pulley, and Dannen Vance concerning the letter that accompanied the return of their passports.

Dear Mr. Christopher,

We, Sukul K. Baul, Aislinn Pulley, and Dannen Vance, each received letters dated February 21, 1995, from William B. Wharton, director of passport policy and advisory services, accompanying the return of our United States passports. Our passports were seized by the Customs Service at Chicago's O'Hare airport on January 21 and 22, 1995.

In the letter, Mr. Wharton states that the passport "is herewith returned since there was no violation of passport restrictions." But he adds that the passports were "taken up by the Customs Service with other evidence of travel to Cuba in contravention of" restrictions "imposed under the provisions of the Trading with the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. 1 et seq.) and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 6001-10)."

This statement by Mr. Wharton is false. All our activities were consistent with existing regulations and our rights as outlined in the U.S. Constitution. There was no "contravention" of the law on our part. The actions taken by the customs service at O'Hare airport constituted harassment in violation of our First Amendment rights and freedom of the press and freedom to travel. The assertion that we "contravened" the law reinforces this violation by seeking to justify it.

Sincerely,  
Sukul Baul, Aislinn Pulley,  
and Dannen Vance

## — REPORT BACK FROM CUBA YOUTH BRIGADE —

### Houston Peace News

Seventy young people from the United States as well as Britain, Canada, Germany, Iceland, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden participated in the International Youth Brigade to Cuba in January. Brigade participants were on editorial assignment for newspapers and radio stations and are reporting back on the Cuban revolution today. The *Militant* is featuring reprints and excerpts from those journalistic accounts.

Following is an excerpt of an article by David Creed, an oil worker, published in the *Houston Peace News*.

BY DAVID CREED

On January 6-20, 1995, I participated in an international solidarity tour of Cuba with the International Youth Brigade to Cuba. Seventy young people from Canada, Britain, Mexico, Spain, and the United States made the trip to better understand what is happening in Cuba today by speaking with Cubans and observing their daily lives. We visited a sugar mill, schools, day-care centers, hospitals, a biotechnology center, recreation areas and an agricultural camp at Ciego de Avila. This camp especially interested me.

Food production dropped sharply in Cuba following the collapse of the Soviet

Union. Shortages of fuel and spare parts necessary to maintain agricultural equipment as well as fertilizer and herbicides to cultivate food crops resulted in the need for more manual labor. In response, volunteer work contingents were organized throughout the country.

One such group of volunteers, the *Eduardo Garcia* youth contingent, is located on a banana farm in the province of Ciego de Avila, near the city of the same name. The camp was organized by the Union of Young Communists (UJC) and consisted of 100 volunteers from throughout the province.

They serve for periods of time ranging from a few months to a maximum of seven years, although most commit to one year of service. Volunteers come from diverse backgrounds: construction workers, accountants, bus drivers, and engineers work together in the fields defending their revolution.

We lived with the workers of the *Eduardo Garcia* contingent for a week, which provided us with a unique opportunity to learn about the Cuba never covered by major U.S. news media. Morale was high at the camp. Nothing exemplified this more than morning activities. As the flag was raised accompanied by the national

anthem, the Cubans stood at rigid attention. The names of individuals who had worked exceptionally well the previous day were then announced and applauded as vanguard workers....

We saw other ways in which Cubans are dealing with food shortages. Military units have been assigned to agricultural duties; a few miles from the *Eduardo Garcia* contingent about 50 soldiers cultivated another banana farm. Members of schools and workplaces have planted gardens on site and, in some cases, raise livestock to increase the variety and quantity of food available.

Also, state farms have been allowed to sell surplus produce at unregulated prices in agricultural markets. In fact, while we were in Havana, workers from the *Eduardo Garcia* group visited us when they came to the city to sell a truckload of bananas.

Many Cubans said they were happy to have U.S. citizens visiting and that their grievances were only with the U.S. government. They were very aware of the amount of propaganda disseminated here against the Cuban revolution....

The workers of the *Eduardo Garcia* contingent are typical of thousands of youth volunteering for agricultural duties across Cuba. They represent something not considered (publicly) in U.S. foreign policy circles: Cubans who are actively supporting their government.

## — YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD —

# Students march for abortion rights in Indiana

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists, an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS or to join write: Young Socialists, P.O. Box 2396, New York, NY 10009, or call (212) 475-6482.

BY TOM ALTER

BLOOMINGTON, Indiana — More than 80 students and pro-choice activists marched through the campus of Indiana University here to the Monroe County Courthouse with chants of "Not the church, not the state, women must decide their fate" and "Act up, raise your voice, Monroe County is pro-choice." The demonstration took place on March 8, International Women's Day, in defense of a woman's right to choose.

This was the first pro-choice march in Bloomington in two years. The march was organized by the Indiana University student organization Reclaim Our Reproductive Rights. Many students who participated in the event were from various organizations, such as the Women's Student Union, Students Concerned About Violence Against Women, Bloomington Solidarity, and the Young Socialists.

Some students commented that they realize now that just because President Bill Clinton claims to be pro-choice, a woman's right to choose will not automatically be defended. It was agreed that more activity is needed to defend abortion rights. There were calls to build the April 9 national march in Washington, D.C., called by the National Organization for Women.

Tom Alter is a YS member in Bloomington.

### Teachers strike in Iceland

BY OLOF ANDRA PROPPE

REYKJAVIK, Iceland — Teachers at elementary and pre-university public schools in Iceland have been on strike since February 17.

They are demanding a 15 percent wage increase and a reduction in teaching hours to better prepare for their classes. They belong to two unions, generally divided along the line of the grade they teach.

They are also protesting cutbacks in education, which means in practice that students will get fewer hours of teaching than is stated in the law. Classes are overcrowded, teachers say, with up to 30 students in a single class. Working conditions are also poor. The teachers point out the government is expecting the school system to yield results similar to Denmark,

Finland, Norway, and Sweden, while paying out only two-thirds of what the other Nordic countries spend.

Many students solidarize with their teachers, despite the fact that several may have to spend an extra year in school to graduate.

One week into the strike, dozens of students occupied the hall in the ministry of finances. Erpur Eyvindarson, a member of the Young Socialists, addressed the crowd as television reporters were taping. "The responsibility for the conflict with the teachers lies here, with the government and their capitalist politics," he said.

A teacher told radio reporters that she liked the action. "Our heartbeats have the same rhythm," she said.

Olof Andra Proppe is a member of the Young Socialists in Iceland.



# The working-class fight for 'cheap gov't'

## Lessons from world's first workers government, the Paris Commune

BY GREG ROSENBERG

In recent debate about balancing the federal budget, Democrats and Republicans alike posture against "big government," waste, inefficiency, bureaucracy, corruption, and the like. These big-business representatives, drawing on the hatred of millions of working people for government bureaucracy, assert that they are its foremost opponents.

The politicians' demagoguery serves as useful cover to mask the real desire of both parties, which is to gut the social wage won in past decades of struggles by the working class. They falsely — and deliberately — tie universal entitlements such as Social Security, Medicare, and other such programs to bureaucracy and "big spending."

How does the working-class movement propose to deal with the question of "big government"?

Reprinted below are excerpts from *The Civil War in France*, a document written by Karl Marx for the General Council of the International Working Men's Association — the First International. Marx, along with Frederick Engels, was a central founding leader of the modern communist movement.

The article deals with the world's first workers government, known as the Paris Commune, established in March 1871. "Storming heaven," as Marx put it in a letter, the "proletariat for the first time held political power," for three months in Paris.

"The Commune," wrote Marx in the article below, "made that catch-word of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure — the standing army and State functionarism," in a matter of days. The Commune, with the armed working class of the city at the vanguard, advanced radical democratic measures to transform the lives of the great majority in Paris, which Marx described as "the tendency of a government of the people by the people."

In an 1891 introduction to *The Civil War in France*, Engels highlighted three measures taken by the workers. First was the decision to "do away with all the old repressive machinery." Second the Commune "filled all posts — administrative, judicial and educational — by election on the basis of universal suffrage of all concerned, subject to the right of recall at any time by the same electors." Third, "all officials, high or low, were paid only the wages received by other workers."

In *State and Revolution*, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin explained that the actions of the Commune helped to unify the oppressed and exploited, who "are oppressed by the [capitalist] government and long for its overthrow, long for 'cheap' government." The destruction of the enormous bureaucracy, Lenin pointed out "can be achieved only by the proletariat, and by achieving it, the proletariat at the same time takes a step towards the socialist reorganization of the state."

These political measures, Lenin wrote,



Workers drag cannon to Montmartre, the highest section of Paris, to defend the Commune against assault by troops loyal to the bourgeoisie. The world's first workers government, wrote Karl Marx, "will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society."

"acquire their full meaning and significance only in connection with the 'expropriation of the expropriators' either being accomplished or in preparation."

The Commune was never able to extend the revolution to other cities or the countryside in France. The armies of the exploiters, based at Versailles, overthrew the Commune in May 1871, after heroic resistance by the working people of Paris.

The rich lessons of the Paris Commune are detailed in several books and pamphlets, including *Marx and Engels on the Paris Commune*, published by Progress Publishers and distributed by Pathfinder Press. That compilation includes "The Civil War in France," excerpted here.

Subheadings are by the *Militant*.



BY KARL MARX

On the dawn of the 18th of March, Paris arose to the thunderburst of "Vive la Commune!" What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?

"The proletarians of Paris," said the Central Committee in its manifesto of the 18th March, "amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs... They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing upon the governmental power."

But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.

The centralized State power, with its ubiquitous organs of standing army, police, bureaucracy, clergy, and judicature — organs wrought after the plan of a systematic and hierarchic division of labour

— originates from the days of absolute monarchy, serving nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggles against feudalism....

**Government becomes hotbed of debt**

During the subsequent *régimes* the Government, placed under parliamentary control — that is, under the direct control of the propertied classes — became not only a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes; with its irresistible allurements of place, pelf, and patronage, it became not only the bone of contention between the rival factions and adventurers of the ruling classes; but its political character changed simultaneously with the economic changes of society.

At the same pace at which the progress of modern industry developed, widened, intensified the class antagonism between capital and labour, the State power assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organized for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism. After every revolution marking a progressive phase in the class struggle, the purely repressive character of the State power stands out in bolder and bolder relief....

The State power, apparently soaring high above society, was at the same time itself the greatest scandal of that society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions. Its own rottenness, and the rottenness of the society it had saved, were laid bare by the bayonet of Prussia, herself eagerly bent upon transferring the supreme seat of that *régime* from Paris to Berlin. Imperialism is, at the same time, the most prostitute and the ultimate form of the State power which nascent middle-class society had commenced to elaborate as a means of its own emancipation from feudalism, and which full-grown bourgeois society had finally transformed into a means for the enslavement of labour by capital....

**Commune abolishes standing army**

The first decree of the Commune, therefore, was the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.

The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, of acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.

Instead of continuing to be the agent of the Central Government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes, and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the Administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and the representation al-

lowances of the high dignitaries of State disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves. Public functions ceased to be the private property of the tools of the Central Government. Not only municipal administration, but the whole initiative hitherto exercised by the State was laid into the hands of the Commune....

The Commune made that catch-word of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure — the standing army and State functionarism. Its very existence presupposed the non-existence of monarchy, which, in Europe at least, is the normal encumbrance and indispensable cloak of class-rule. It supplied the Republic with the basis of really democratic institutions. But neither cheap government nor the "true Republic" was its ultimate aim; they were its mere concomitants....

When the Paris Commune took the management of the revolution in its own hands; when plain working men for the first time dared to infringe upon the Governmental privilege of their "natural superiors," and, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, performed their work modestly, conscientiously, and efficiently, — performed it at salaries the highest of which barely amounted to one-fifth of what, according to high scientific authority, is the minimum required for a secretary to a certain metropolitan school-board, — the old world writhed in convulsions of rage at the sight of the Red Flag, the symbol of the Republic of Labour, floating over the Hotel de Ville....

The Commune would have delivered the peasant of the blood tax, — would have given him a cheap government, — transformed his present blood-suckers, the notary, advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires, into salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to, himself. It would have freed him of the tyranny of the *garde champêtre*, the gendarme, and the prefect, would have put enlightenment by the schoolmaster in the place of stultification by the priest....

The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence. Its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people. Such were the abolition of the nightwork of journeymen bakers; the prohibition, under penalty, of the employers' practice to reduce wages by levying upon their workpeople fines under manifold pretexts, — a process in which the employer combines in his own person the parts of legislator, judge, and executor, and filches the money to boot. Another measure of this class was the surrender, to associations of workmen, under reserve of compensation, of all closed workshops and factories, no matter whether the respective capitalists had absconded or preferred to strike work.

The financial measures of the Commune, remarkable for their sagacity and moderation, could only be such as were compatible with the state of a besieged town....

Wonderful, indeed, was the change the Commune had wrought in Paris! No longer any trace of the meretricious Paris of the Second Empire. No longer was Paris the rendezvous of British landlords, Irish absenteees, American ex-slaveholders and shoddy men, Russian ex-serfowners, and Wallachian boyards. No more corpses at the Morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time since the days of February, 1848, the streets of Paris were safe, and that without any police of any kind.

"We," said a member of the Commune, "hear no longer of assassination, theft, and personal assault; it seems indeed as if the police had dragged along with it to Versailles all its Conservative friends...."

Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.

### FOR Further reading



#### On the Paris Commune

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

"Storming heaven," Marx wrote, the "proletariat for the first time held political power" for three months in Paris in 1871 and the international workers struggle "entered upon a new stage." Writings, letters, and speeches. Progress Publishers. Distributed by Pathfinder. \$15.95



#### Communism and the Fight for a Popular Revolutionary Government: 1848 to Today

in New International no. 3 \$8  
Mary Alice Waters

Also available from Pathfinder...  
**Leon Trotsky**  
on the Paris Commune \$4.50

Available at bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Phone (212) 741-0690. Fax (212) 727-0150.



# SWP founder lent solidarity to Mexico

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

With the Clinton administration's \$20 billion deal with the Mexican government, which has agreed to put up the country's oil export revenues as "collateral," Wall Street hopes to finally get a foothold in Mexico's state-owned oil industry. Why has this effort been so potentially explosive, and why do U.S. big-business commentators wince uncomfortably when referring to Mexico's nationalized oil?

Militant readers may be interested to know that James P. Cannon, a longtime communist leader in the United States and founder of the Socialist Workers Party, was in Mexico City when President Lázaro Cárdenas surprised the world by expropriating the big U.S. and British oil companies on March 18, 1938. Cannon — and the predecessor of this paper — had quite a bit to say on the subject at the time.

The simmering conflict had flared over the refusal of the imperialist oil giants to agree to demands by oil workers for decent wages and workers' representation in the management of the oil fields. Under growing mass pressure, including a powerful oil workers strike, Cárdenas announced a decree expropriating the oil holdings of Standard Oil, Royal Dutch Shell, and 15 other foreign companies.

Working people mobilized massively in support of this action. Some 200,000 workers, peasants, and students poured into downtown Mexico City to demonstrate their support for the nationalization of the oil, strongly viewed as the country's patrimony. Oil workers took control of the oil fields.

## Imperialists embargo Mexico

Washington and London bitterly lashed back at Mexico's working people; to this day they have not forgiven the Mexican

people. Brushing aside Cárdenas's offer of compensation, President Franklin Roosevelt suspended U.S. silver purchases from Mexico, the country's second-biggest source of foreign revenue. The imperialists organized an international boycott of Mexican oil, yanked all their technical personnel out of Mexico, and launched a slander campaign against the Cárdenas government.

When these efforts failed, the British government backed a fascist-minded landowner, Gen. Saturnino Cedillo, who — angered by the government's popular land reform — launched a revolt against Cárdenas with his private army of 10,000. Cedillo obtained airplanes and other covert arms and money from the United States. Leaning on the mobilized labor movement, the Mexican government quickly crushed the uprising.

The struggle against imperialist domination in Mexico won solidarity from working people worldwide that blocked further intervention by Washington and London, both of which were posturing as democracies in their preparations for the coming world war. "The protests of American trade unions piled up," reported *Socialist Appeal*, which later became the *Militant*.

"Minneapolis workers, too, declare their solidarity with the progressive struggle against the great oil barons and the diplomats. Hands off Mexico!" declared a front-page article in the combative Minneapolis Teamster paper *Northwest Organizer* in its March 31, 1938, issue.

Cannon and two other SWP leaders had traveled to Mexico City for discussions with exiled Russian communist leader Leon Trotsky, who had been granted asylum by Cárdenas the year before. The day after the expropriation decree, they issued a public statement hailing "this bold and



Workers in Mexico City celebrate the expropriation of oil companies, March 1938.

courageous measure" taken "in the interests of the toiling people." They pledged to wage a vigorous campaign among workers in the United States "to defend the Mexican people in their fight for economic and national independence."

## Cannon addresses mass meeting

On March 30, Cannon addressed a meeting at Casa del Pueblo, a left-wing trade union center in Mexico City. "On two day's notice, an audience of 1,000 workers augmented by truckloads of peasants who came in from the countryside greeted James P. Cannon," *Socialist Appeal* reported. Cannon's speech was translated by prominent revolutionary artist Diego Rivera. *Socialist Appeal* editor Max Shachtman and Minneapolis Teamster and SWP leader Vincent Ray Dunne also spoke, as did Genaro Gómez, secretary of Casa del Pueblo.

In his speech, as yet unpublished in English, Cannon told the crowd, "U.S. impe-

rialism is the biggest robber of Mexico and of all the peoples of Latin America. U.S. imperialism is also the worst enemy of American workers. The main purpose of our visit was to get to know better the Mexican workers to find ways of fighting together — the workers of the United States and the people of Mexico against the U.S. imperialists. The people of Mexico, who have already passed through revolutions, have much to teach us about how to fight for our rights."

Cannon added, "The recent expropriation of the American and British oil companies has the full support of all revolutionary American workers. When we return to our country we plan to hold mass meetings to tell the truth about the struggle of Mexican workers and urge American workers to support them." He emphasized, "All those who fight imperialism are our friends and comrades."

Cannon also responded to a vicious slander campaign against "Trotskyism" by Stalinist leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, who was then the head of the main Mexican labor federation. He castigated the U.S. Stalinists for backing Roosevelt's misnamed "Good Neighbor" policy at a time when Washington was blockading Mexico.

*Socialist Appeal* exposed Washington's moves with front-page articles headlined "U.S. Strikes At Mexican Labor: Silver Move Made To Aid Oil Robbers" and "Smash Fascism In Mexico: Workers Must Mobilize To Fight Cedillo." It explained, "From the point of view of the proletarian revolution, the oil expropriations are of two-fold importance: first, the Mexican masses have learned that foreign imperialism is not invulnerable; and second, the taking over of the oil fields by the national bourgeois state will inevitably hasten class differentiation in Mexico. The workers and peasants...will learn to understand that the cause of their independence rests not only on the fight against foreign imperialism but also and above all on their class liberation."

"The expropriation of oil is neither socialism nor communism. But it is a highly progressive measure of national self-defense," wrote Trotsky in a feature article published in the June 25, 1938, *Appeal*. "Every honest working-class organization of the entire world, and first of all in Great Britain, is duty bound to take an irreconcilable position against the imperialist robbers, their diplomacy, their press, and their fascist hirelings." In a 1940 article, reprinted in the Pathfinder book *Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay*, Trotsky elaborated further on the Mexican oil nationalization, highlighting the need for "the struggle for the complete independence of the trade unions" from the government.

The SWP sponsored a major rally in New York on April 14, 1938, under the title "Down with the War-Makers! Hands Off Mexico!" featuring Cannon's firsthand account of the struggle there. As reported in the *Socialist Appeal*, "the meeting adopted a resolution of greetings to the Mexican workers and sent a message to the government congratulating it upon its action in expropriating British and American oil properties."

## Mexican government starts austerity drive

Continued from front page

goods that working people have endured in recent months. Bus fares in Mexico City leapt 100 percent the first week in March. A television station reported that the government, in a cynical attempt to win support for the price hike, was "demanding" better service — such as enforcement of the requirement that the buses come to a full stop to let people off.

## Mass unemployment skyrockets

Labor Minister Santiago Oñate projected that a total of 1 million workers could be laid off by the end of the year. Half a million are to be axed in the next two months. Roughly 250,000 workers have lost their jobs since the December 20 devaluation of the peso.

In the first week of March, thousands of workers were laid off from cement, garment, and other industries in the states of Jalisco, Puebla, Guerrero, Hidalgo, and Aguascalientes. In Hidalgo, 500 temporary workers were axed by the PEMEX oil refinery.

The Mexican bourgeoisie is trying to stabilize the peso, which has lost half its value since the devaluation and is now hovering around seven to the dollar. The Zedillo regime is also anxious to show it can continue to pay off debts, including the payments due on short-term, high interest notes known as *tesobonos*. The *tesobonos* were used to attract foreign capital, but this worked only as long as the economy seemed to be sound. As of March 14, the government had paid off \$12.5 billion of *tesobono* debt, leaving \$17.5 billion outstanding.

In a March 10 statement, the Bank of Mexico hastened to assure that the government plan "does not contemplate any restrictions on foreign debt payments or any moratoriums whatsoever."

Banks have hiked interest payments to above 50 percent as part of an attempt to stop the flight of capital, with devastating consequences for many small businesses and individuals holding credit card debts or car loans.

The government will also step up privatizations of state-owned industries, including petrochemicals, electric utilities, and railroads. The Mexico City *Financiero* reported in its March 8 issue that the Mexico City-Washington package "includes the sale of unspecified key state enterprises to stop the abrupt collapse of the peso."

Zedillo held off announcing the new measures until the Mexican congress approved the deal with Washington, which includes the condition that revenue from oil sales be funneled through the Federal Reserve Bank in New York.

## 'The burden rests on the Mexicans'

The *Financial Times*, however, said Zedillo's measures "will succeed only if foreign investors finally begin to believe him and Mexicans recognise that the heavy burden of delivering on the promise rests almost entirely with them."

While big business in Mexico objected to any tax increase, there is no ceiling on price rises. Zedillo was unable to get either business or union officials to agree to set wage and price ceilings in an agreement known as the *pacto*. The government has traditionally been able to win agreement for a pact from the Confederation of Mexican Workers, whose leaders have long supported the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI). This is the first time it is proceeding with an economic plan without such an arrangement.

Finance capital hopes that Zedillo can avoid a social explosion under the full-blown impact of the measures. The electrical workers union planned a March 16 action to demand a 30 percent wage hike. Government leaders said they hoped protests would be muted by many workers' fear of losing their jobs at a time when the unemployment rate is shooting up. But, said one senior Mexican official, "it's going to be a long, hot summer."

Zedillo is attempting to portray Mexico's political situation as stable and under control, claiming he is taking steps to clean up corruption and end the traditional impunity enjoyed by bourgeois politi-

cians. But many workers, students, and poor farmers *Militant* correspondents spoke with viewed Zedillo as no different from his predecessors. At a protest of some 800 peasants from Oaxaca who marched to Mexico City to demand land and better conditions in their communities, Alejandro Cruz López commented, "Every six years we see this spectacle, this theater. It does not benefit us; we don't get involved," he said.

In an effort to contain the situation in Chiapas the government announced March 14 it would formally suspend arrest warrants issued last month against six leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and it would move troops out of villages in territory previously controlled by the EZLN. The army, however, will continue to conduct "limited patrols." At press time, the EZLN had not yet issued a response.

The occupation of Chiapas has forced some 10,000 peasants to flee their villages, said Onécimo Hidalgo in an interview. Hidalgo is active in CONPAZ, which groups 13 non governmental organizations, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. He said the army has sacked homes and villages where they believe people are sympathetic to the EZLN, and many peasants who have returned to such areas are finding their food supplies and crops have been destroyed.

The army presence has also emboldened the right wing, led by wealthy ranchers and businessmen, who have been mobilizing to demand the army remain, that land taken over by peasants be returned, and that Samuel Ruiz, the bishop of San Cristóbal, be forced to leave. For the last several weekends these forces have led marches past the cathedral in San Cristóbal, burning effigies of Ruiz and demanding the army take a hard hand. The cathedral is a center for political organization in the area.

In response to these marches, hundreds of indigenous people have mobilized to defend the cathedral with a 24-hour presence.



# Iowa unionists rally for Firestone strike

BY NORTON SANDLER

DES MOINES — Union members from throughout the region rallied at the state capitol here on March 11 to support rubber workers on strike for the past eight months at the Bridgestone/Firestone agricultural tire plant in this city.

Most of the more than 400 participants were strikers from United Rubber Workers (URW) Local 310. Many brought family members to the rally. Workers came from dozens of plants in the Des Moines area and from as far away as Waterloo, Iowa, and Topeka, Kansas. URW members are also striking Bridgestone/Firestone plants in Decatur, Illinois; Noblesville, Indiana; and Oklahoma City.

Speakers at the rally included Democratic Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa; Ken Coss, URW international president; John Sellers, head of URW's Bridgestone/Firestone bargaining committee; Chuck Gifford, head of the United Auto Workers CAP Council in Iowa; farm activist Gary Hoske; Bill McGill of the Des Moines NAACP; and Dave Polisch, representing the area Catholic Archdiocese.

Don Northcraft, president of URW Local 307 at the Goodyear plant in Topeka, presented a check for \$15,000 to Local 310 president Bernie Sinclair. The Topeka local has raised \$90,000 for Firestone unionists during the strike. United Transportation Union officials from Iowa also presented a donation.

Coss reported to the crowd that 850 workers who have been on strike at Pirelli/Armstrong tire plants for eight months in Nashville, Tennessee, and Hanford, California, would return to work March 13 following a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruling finding the

company guilty of unfair labor practices for refusing to bargain in good faith. The employer must take all union members back and get rid of workers it had hired as "permanent replacements." Coss said Pirelli/Armstrong will now begin to bargain with the union on a new contract after refusing to do so during the strike. He said the URW has filed similar "unfair labor practice" charges against Bridgestone/Firestone.

Negotiations with Firestone are set for March 13 in Chicago. This is the first face-to-face negotiations with the company since the strike began last July. An expanded negotiating session that will include the entire Firestone bargaining council is slated for March 24.

Meanwhile, the Minneapolis NLRB office has asked a federal court to stipulate \$5,000 fines against URW Local 310 for every picket line incident of alleged threats, harassment, or vandalism. The NLRB document filed with the court claims union pickets are repeatedly violating court injunctions slapped on the union.

Harkin, who was the featured speaker, spoke glowingly of President Bill Clinton's recent executive order making companies that hire permanent replacements ineligible for U.S. government contracts. Alluding to the Bridgestone/Firestone strike U.S. labor secretary Robert Reich had earlier told reporters in Washington, D.C., "We don't want the industrial equivalent of rookies and minor leaguers making tires for our next Desert Storm."

Harkin said Bridgestone/Firestone currently has 47 government contracts totaling \$8 million, including \$1.5 million at their Des Moines plant. The Executive Order, however, is not retroactive.



Militant/Barbara Sandler

Unionists rally to support rubber workers on strike against Firestone in Des Moines, Iowa, March 11. United Rubber Workers have been on picket lines for eight months.

Gary Hoske, representing the Iowa Farmers Union, explained that many small farmers are being forced off their land and "go into the cities and begin to compete for jobs. Farmers must realize that the same forces trying to put you down, are trying to put us down," said Hoske.

URW Local 310 members hosted a reception after the rally. Strikers were eager to review where they stand in this tough fight with Bridgestone/Firestone, a giant conglomerate owned by capitalist families in Japan. Evident in the discussions was the strikers' resolve not to buckle against the company's union-breaking attempt.

The company, which had claimed earlier that it had all the replacements it needed, is once again sending strikers letters encouraging them to "apply for a job."

Union member Bob Peters had just received such a letter. He noted that while numerous electricians and other skilled

workers have crossed the line the company still doesn't "have the tire builders it needs to get production up to full scale."

Nick Campero commented that Bridgestone/Firestone "ran an ad for replacements in the paper two days in a row this week. Either people don't like the hours they are working or they realize they might not have a job when this ends."

Paul Gnade, head of the URW's Family Support Group, recently spent three days traveling in a mobile home to northwest Iowa trying to convince farmers and farm implement dealers not to use Firestone tires. A radio appearance by the strikers helped push one implement dealer over the edge. Gnade soberly described the hardship that many strikers and their families have endured over the past eight months. "Eventually this company will be forced to come to terms with what they have done to people," he said.

## Socialist candidate: 'Labor must lead fight for jobs'

BY ANGEL LARISCY AND MARTIN DUNNE

DECATUR, Illinois — "Betsy Farley is the only candidate dealing with the real issues that the working class here in Decatur and the world is facing," said David Yard, a member of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1969 from Morrisonville, Illinois. He was speaking to more than two dozen people at a Militant Labor Forum here March 11 about the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Decatur.

The forum capped off a day of campaigning by workers and youth from Decatur, Peoria, and Normal, Illinois; as well as Des Moines, Iowa; and St. Louis, Missouri, for the socialist campaign.

Throughout the day, at picket lines and shopping plazas, campaign supporters discussed with workers and youth a working-class response to the bosses' attacks here and around the globe. Many campaigners met people who had read about Farley in the newspaper and were glad to see a worker running for office. Issues such as defense of the Cuban revolution and a woman's right to choose abortion were a

point of many discussions.

Yard said that he visited the picket lines with Farley and urged strikers to read the *Militant*. He first began reading the *Militant* during the Pittston coal miners strike in 1989 and soon discovered it was "the one newspaper that told the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

Also joining the socialist candidate on the platform were Frankie Travis, a locked-out A.E. Staley worker and a member of the United Paperworkers International Union Local 7837, and Sukul Baul, a student at Illinois State University in Normal, who recently returned from Cuba on the International Youth Brigade.

"In Decatur," Travis reported, "the working class is under attack." He noted that all the candidates are "calling for more cops as an answer to violence. But the violence is on their part." He explained how the big-business press demonizes sections of the working class and then justifies anti-working-class actions against strikers and other workers, as well as police brutality.

In the time that he has been campaigning for Farley, Travis said, he has found

that "people are ready for someone who tells the truth about what goes on here and across the world."

Baul, who had his passport seized by U.S. Customs officials upon his return from Cuba in January and recently won it back, said he thought it was important for everyone to support the socialist candidate, whether they live in Decatur or not. "The example of the campaign gives me hope for the future," Baul said.

Farley began her talk by describing the conditions working people in Decatur face — an official unemployment rate of 7.7 percent and 17 percent of the industrial workforce on strike or locked out. "Decatur is a city of working-class fighters who are standing up to the offensive by wealthy corporate owners. What this election campaign is about is the world beyond Decatur. Because you can't understand the crisis here unless you put it in the context of conditions worldwide."

"Labor must lead a fight for jobs for all," Farley said. The Socialist Workers campaign is putting forward demands for a 30-hour workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work around, as well as a massive public works program, unemployment compensation at union scale, and defense of affirmative action.

"Despite the inroads the employers have made against the working class, there is resistance," Farley said. She encouraged those present to be actively involved in supporting the struggles of Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone, and Staley workers. "While the corporations are relentless in trying to reverse their declining rate of profit, they aren't unbeatable."

The socialist candidate pointed to the example of Cuba for workers and farmers around the world. "The U.S. government has been driving against this revolution for more than 35 years because workers there continue to defend their sovereignty and socialism," she said. "We need to get the truth out and oppose U.S. policy."

The Socialist Workers candidate noted that two youth from Cuba will be touring Illinois April 14-18 and that the National Network on Cuba will be holding a regional meeting in Chicago on April 8 to discuss plans for an October 14 demonstration against U.S. government policy toward Cuba.

A number of people signed up to get more information and a team of supporters is traveling in central Illinois getting out the socialist alternative. More than \$300 in campaign contributions was collected at the meeting.

## Fannie Curran, longtime activist in communist movement, dies

BY DOUG JENNESS

MINNEAPOLIS — Fannie Curran, a longtime activist in the communist movement in Minnesota, died here on March 2 at the nursing home where she had lived for the past three years. She was 85 years old.

Curran joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in Minneapolis in 1924. When members and leaders of the Communist Party and the YCL were expelled by the Stalinists in 1928 for continuing to defend and carry out communist perspectives, Curran was among them.

She was active in the Minneapolis branch of the Communist League of America during the 1934 Teamsters strikes and was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. She re-

mained active in the party until the end of the 1960s. In her last years, until failing health prevented it, she read the *Militant* and *New Internationalist* closely and contributed financially to the SWP, the Militant's Prisoner Fund, the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, and other funds from her meager retirement benefits.

A meeting to celebrate Curran's contributions and example to the communist movement will be held at 5:00 p.m., Sunday, March 26 at 2490 University Avenue in St. Paul. Messages can be sent to the SWP at the above address in St. Paul, Minnesota 55104.

An article highlighting Curran's lifelong work in building the communist movement will appear in the *Militant* following the meeting.



Militant/Nereida Flecha Pérez

Betsy Farley (second from right), campaigning at Firestone picket line. "Farley is the only candidate dealing with real issues," said David Yard, an Illinois miner.



# 3,200 rail workers strike across Canada

BY SUSAN BERMAN

TORONTO — Some 3,200 track maintenance workers at Canadian Pacific Rail (CP) downed tools in a national strike beginning March 13.

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE) and the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), which organizes 4,000 CP workers, had earlier planned a series of rotating strikes and job actions against the carrier.

But when some 300 members of the BMWE walked off the job March 8, the company responded by locking them out. CP said it would lock out all workers who took strike action. The company also declared it was suspending disability, sickness, and maternity top-off benefits to all 3,200 BMWE members until a contract settlement is reached.

Workers responded to company attacks by spreading the work stoppage. "The company thinks it can starve us out because we have no strike fund. But they're wrong, we've been preparing for this for a long time," said Mike Marchuk while on the picket line in Montreal. "We're in for the long haul."

Some 40,000 rail workers have been without a contract since December 1993, including workers at CP, Canadian National Railways, and Via Rail. The BMWE and CAW represent shop, clerical, and maintenance workers.

The operating trades, organized by the United Transportation Union and Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, are in separate negotiations with different strike deadlines.

At rail yard entrances in Montreal on March 13, dozens of locomotive and rail car repair workers who belong to the CAW refused to cross BMWE picket lines. "We'll probably be out in a few days as well," said machinist Ron Ellison.

The company immediately began bringing in office personnel and other strike-breakers to replace BMWE members.

The CP bosses hope that by forcing a national strike, they can get the government to quickly impose back-to-work legislation, as it did in 1987. The federal transport minister, Doug Young, has threatened emergency legislation to order strikers back to work.

The unions are fighting against further

job cuts on the railroad. Between 1989 and 1994, rail bosses in Canada cut staff by 24 percent. As a result of these and other cost-cutting measures, profits at rail companies topped \$329 million in 1993. Safety conditions on the railroads for workers and passengers have sunk. Now Canadian National and CP are preparing further moves to increase their competitive position in the North American transportation industry.

In 1985, railworkers won a contractual clause pledging that workers with eight or more years of service would receive guaranteed income if their jobs were eliminated by the company. The income would last until a new job opened up in their region.

The rail bosses are trying to eliminate this agreement. An article in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* reported that "railways say employment security is an outdated goodie that prevents them from doing the restructuring needed to be competitive. Modifying or getting rid of it would be an effective tool in keeping down inflated labour costs and ensuring future profitability, they argue."

Junior Canasa, a welder at CP Rail in Toronto, said that rail traffic where he works has dropped dramatically since the walkouts began.

Maria Rehner, president of the Canadian Industrial Transportation League, which represents 400 corporate members, said, "We're hurting. Our cargo isn't being delivered, we're missing deadlines."

The CAW, which represents 20,000 rail workers at different carriers, has set March 15 as its date to initiate job actions at CP Rail. The CAW and BMWE took out ads in national newspapers urging companies that ship on CP to find alternative routes.

Rail workers in Toronto expect to join the picket lines March 15. CAW member Canasa told the *Militant*, "our main concern is job security. But we're also going out in solidarity with the BMWE workers."

Susan Berman is a member of CAW Local 1285 in Toronto. Roger Annis, a member of Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada Local 841 in Montreal, contributed to this article.

## Miami speak-out protests threat of anti-immigrant measure in next elections

BY SETH GALINSKY  
AND THERESA WILLIAMSON

MIAMI — A fight is shaping up here over plans to put a Proposition 187-type proposal on the ballot for the upcoming elections. The anti-immigrant law, which was passed in California last November and is now being challenged in court, would prohibit children of undocumented workers from attending school, deny health care to so-called illegal immigrants, and require teachers and health-care workers to act as immigration agents.

Several rightist groups in Florida say they will unveil a ballot proposal soon. In response, coalitions have sprung up around the state to oppose the attempt to restrict the rights of immigrants.

One hundred people attended a March 11 speak-out in Miami organized by the Committee for Dignity and Justice for Immigrants. "We are very worried that there are people who want to blame immigrants for the economic problems in this country," Marlene Bastien, from Haitian Women of Miami, told the crowd.

### U.S. policy has forced people to flee

Rafael Alfaro, a spokesperson for the Salvadoran Community Center, noted that there are thousands of Salvadoran refugees in the United States. He criticized the hypocrisy of those who want to limit refugee rights when "it is the U.S. intervention in Central America that created the problems that led to many people fleeing their homelands."

Also speaking at the meeting were Monica Russo, district director of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; Orlando Yanez from the Florida Farmworker Association; Eugenio Torres from the League of Hispanic Voters; and Angel Dominguez, director of the Worker's Center, a project of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union.

Among those in attendance were delegations from Cambio Cubano, a group that opposes the Cuban revolution, but has spoken out against the U.S. embargo, and the Association of Haitian Refugees from Guantánamo.

The Committee for Dignity and Justice for Immigrants is planning an April 7 candlelight vigil and protest at the Torch of Friendship in downtown Miami.

Two legislators who introduced an anti-immigrant bill in the Florida legislature, including a provision to deny "public social services or benefits" to "illegal" immigrants, recently retreated from their effort.

After members of the Cuban American Caucus in the legislature objected, the two representatives agreed instead to call for a "study commission." Their proposal still requires state agencies to report the names

of workers without papers to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and makes it a felony to manufacture fake I.D.'s that "disguise" citizenship.

### Concern only for legal immigrants

Cuban Caucus member and Republican state representative Carlos Lacasa, who opposed the anti-immigrant bill, stated, "I don't think public dollars should be going to illegal aliens. My main concern is that legislation does not erode the rights enjoyed by immigrants legally in the country."

In ceding to the pressure from the Cuban Caucus, bill sponsor Rep. Kenneth Pruitt said that he wanted to "avoid a very emotional civil war" in the legislature.

But Doug Guetzloe, statewide petition director for Save Our State (SOS), the main anti-immigrant group, told reporters, "I said before that this legislative session was not going to have the courage to approve legislation like this." He promised that SOS would soon formalize the language for a Proposition 187-type ballot initiative and begin collecting signatures.

While Florida governor Lawton Chiles has stated that he is against a Proposition 187-type law, his actions have put wind in the sails of right-wing anti-immigrant forces. Chiles filed a billion-dollar lawsuit against the U.S. government last year, claiming that Washington should pay more money to Florida because U.S. immigration policy is causing an unfair burden to the state. The lawsuit was dis-



Militant/Aaron Ruby

Demonstration defending the rights of immigrants in San Antonio, Texas, February 25. From Florida to California, Proposition 187-type measures have drawn protests.

missed.

The anti-immigrant proposals have provoked discussion in workplaces and schools across the state. Some immigrant rights activists, in arguing against the law, emphasize that undocumented immigrants should not be deported because they pay taxes and do work that many citizens prefer not to do. Others project that immigrants should try to become citizens.

In a statement distributed at the March 11 speak-out arguing a different approach, the Socialist Workers Party pointed out that the Proposition 187-type measures are not "designed to keep immigrants out of the United States."

"The bosses want undocumented work-

ers to come," the SWP said, "but they want to keep them undocumented so that the rich can bolster their profits with the blood, sweat, and tears of immigrants."

The socialist statement also noted that with the bipartisan scapegoating of immigrants, "the bosses hope to divide the working class." Instead workers should see themselves as "citizens of the world," the socialists said, and follow the example of the 70,000 people who marched in Los Angeles against Proposition 187 last year.

Seth Galinsky is a member of the United Transportation Union and an activist in the Committee for Dignity and Justice for Immigrants in Miami.

## Nebraska packinghouse boss aids INS raid

Continued from front page

nating working Saturdays and people in the plant thought it was odd that second shift was scheduled two weeks in a row.

When supervisors came in to set up their areas the workers found the locker rooms closed. "They told us that the lockers were dirty, how could they be dirty when we had cleaned them the night before?" Casillas said. "They didn't want people to get their knives and equipment on."

Jaime, a worker from the cut floor, said that as they came into the plant for the 7:30 a.m. shift, supervisors told them that the company had scheduled a meeting in the cafeteria at 8:30 a.m. to discuss a shooting that took place the day before in the plant parking lot.

"There were over 300 workers in the cafeteria," Jaime explained. "They took the citizens first and then those who had their papers on them and let them go. Some of the white workers were shouting 'No more mojados [wet backs], bye-bye,' but others were angry at the INS."

"On Monday the line supervisor had a meeting with us and told us that he didn't know about the raid. I think the managers knew but not the supervisors. Now the line is running very slow." The union said it would try to help the workers, Jaime said, especially those cases where mothers were detained and their children were left at home.

One worker from the kill floor explained that it was clear to him something was wrong from the start. "There was not one cow in the pens for the slaughter," he told the *Militant*. "Now the company does not want to give the checks of the deported workers to their relatives, saying that they will turn those checks over to the INS. The INS didn't work for those checks. They fooled us to come in to work, then said that the lockers were dirty, and then about a meeting in the cafeteria."

Excel has 1,600 production workers who live not only in Schuyler but in neighboring communities. Most are from Mexico but there are also many Central American workers.

Concerned that working people in Nebraska may have seen the injustice of the INS action a bit more than the bosses counted on and noting that capitalists need immigrant labor, the *Omaha World-Herald* carried a mildly critical editorial March 7 titled, "They take hard-to-fill jobs, and the reward is deportation." It called on the government to come up with alternatives to the type of mass deportation carried out at Excel.

"It's hard to be angry at men and women, breadwinners, heads of families, who at considerable inconvenience have come to a new country to provide for their loved ones the only way they know how," the big-business newspaper said.

"It makes little sense to perpetuate a system in which the rewards of hard work often include the indignities of arrest and deportation."

Ruth Nebbia is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 431 at the Monfort packinghouse in Des Moines, Iowa.



# Sales drive

Continued from front page

1,589 copies of the new issue of the Marxist magazine, 478 *Militant* renewals, and 80 *Perspectiva Mundial* renewals — meeting or going over all goals by the end of February.

The response distributors got during the *New International* sales campaign signals the opportunities that exist to get the socialist periodicals into the hands of more workers and youth. Writing from Vancouver, British Columbia, at the end of that effort, Ned Dmytryshyn described the range of readers they talked to — from a coal miner in Elkford, British Columbia, who renewed his *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription and bought a copy of *New International* no. 10 to a student in Vancouver, British Columbia, who got the latest *New International* to read the article "Defending Cuba, defending Cuba's socialist revolution" by Mary-Alice Waters.

## Cuba defense activities

In the United States, the sales drive will coincide with stepped-up activities in defense of Cuba. Regional conferences in Chicago and San Francisco to discuss the Cuban revolution and plan activities in opposition to the U.S. government policy of aggression against the Caribbean country will take place April 8. Local educational events are planned across the country in April and May under the banner "Tell the truth about Cuba."

These events, as well as the speaking tour of Cuban youth leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano and report backs by participants in the January International Youth Brigade to Cuba, will provide opportunities to reach activists who are attracted to the Cuban revolution with communist politics.

There will also be many opportunities to sell the socialist press to union members on the job, at factory gates, and on the picket lines. About 15 percent of the copies of *New International* and of renewals sold in the recent circulation campaign were to industrial unionists.

Special *Militant* sales and reporting teams continue to travel to central Illinois where workers are on strike or locked-out at Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone, and A.E. Staley. Participants in a team at the beginning of March reported that strikers, other workers in the area, and students were interested not only in the *Militant's* coverage of their fights but also in a broad range of political questions. Readers who would like to participate in these teams can contact the *Militant* distributor nearest you (see listing at right) or write to the *Militant*.

## Abortion rights demonstrations

The April 9 Rally for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C., and other activities in defense of abortion rights will also be important places to sell the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and *New International*. In many cities in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere protests have broken out against government attacks on education, health care, and other social gains. Distributors can meet young people and others who will be interested in subscribing at these and other social protests, as well as on campuses where many political questions are being discussed and debated daily.

Nearly 1,600 people bought copies of the recently published *New International* no. 10 during the recent sales effort. For hundreds of people, this was their first introduction to the Marxist magazine. The new circulation drive will be a chance to further discuss politics with these readers and introduce them to the ideas contained in the other issues of *New International*.

Issue no. 4 of *Nueva Internacional* in Spanish, with the same contents as *New International* no. 10, is now in print. Volunteers are working to rapidly complete issues in French and Swedish. These new additions to the arsenal of communist politics will be powerful weapons to reach out to workers and youth around the world.

*Militant* issue no. 14, which will be printed March 30, will contain a list of goals adopted by distributors in different cities. Readers who would like to help with this international campaign should contact their local distributor. If there isn't one in your city, you can contact the *Militant* to order a bundle of the paper and take a goal of your own.

# -MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

The Militant Labor Forum is a weekly free-speech meeting for workers, farmers, youth, and others. All those seeking to advance the fight against injustice and exploitation are welcome to attend and participate in these discussions on issues of importance to working people.

## CALIFORNIA

### Los Angeles

**The Attack on Affirmative Action.** Speaker: Gale Shangold, Socialist Workers Party, member of International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

### San Francisco

**Eyewitness Report from Mexico: The Fall of the Peso, the Clinton 'Rescue' Package and the Fight Back by Workers, Peasants, and Youth.** Speakers: Toba Singer, Socialist Workers Party, member of Service Employees International Union Local 790; José Luis Aravena, Young Socialists; Mindy Brudno, member of United Transportation Union Local 1732; and Medea Benjamin, Global Exchange. Sat., March 25, 7 p.m. Dinner: 6 p.m. *The Woman's Building*, 3543 18th St. Donation: Program \$4, dinner \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (415) 285-5323.

## IOWA

### Des Moines

**The Fight for Women's Rights Today.** Sat., March 25, 7 p.m. 2105 Forest Ave. Donation:

\$3. Tel: (515) 246-8249.

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Boston

**Violence Against Women: Where It Comes From and How to Fight It.** Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

## MICHIGAN

### Detroit

**The Crisis of the United Kingdom and the Struggle for Irish Self-Determination.** Speaker: Mark Gilsdorf, Young Socialists. Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 7414 Woodward Ave. (1 block north of Grand Blvd.) Donation: \$4. Tel: (313) 875-0100.

## MINNESOTA

### St. Paul

**Attacks on Affirmation Action: The Debate Today.** Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave. (East side of Hwy. 280, on 16A bus line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

## UTAH

### Salt Lake City

**Mexico: Class Struggle and Financial Crash.** Speaker: Omari Musa, Socialist Workers Party, member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union Local 1-326 in California. Musa attended the 16th International Book Fair in Mexico City. Sat., March 25, 7 p.m. Dinner: 6

# Workers denied fair trials

Continued from Page 4

hands of the cops.

[In a separate federal lawsuit, Curtis sued the Des Moines police department for the beating. In 1992 the court found the cops guilty and awarded Curtis \$60,000 in damages and attorneys fees. Both the verdict and the size of the award are unique in Des Moines, where courts commonly rule in favor of the cops.]

Prosecutors in the Simpson case are trying to establish that the defendant had adequate time to commit the two murders before leaving on a late-evening flight to Chicago. They have called several witnesses who claim to have heard a barking dog between 10:00 and 10:30 p.m. to try to establish the time the murders took place. The defense has countered with videotaped testimony from a woman named Rosa López who says she saw Simpson's Ford Bronco parked outside his home at the same time.

The young woman Curtis was accused of raping testified that her assailant arrived at 5 or 10 minutes after her favorite television show started at 8:00 p.m.

Packinghouse worker Brian Willey testified that he and dozens of co-workers were with Curtis at Los Compadres tavern

until 8:30 p.m. Willey's testimony went unchallenged. Yet Judge Perkins refused to instruct the jury at the conclusion of Curtis's trial that a witness providing an unchallenged alibi was grounds for finding him not guilty.

Attorneys are trying to counter the prosecution's version of the case against Simpson by saying the cops and others bungled how they handled evidence found at the murder site and at his home. A similar battle will take place over the accuracy of DNA tests.

Ironically, in the Curtis case it was the prosecution's own criminology expert who testified that there was no physical evidence linking Curtis and the young woman he supposedly raped.

The difference between Curtis's case and what is unfolding in the Simpson trial is stark.

The nearly 1 million mostly working-class men and women behind bars in this country could each highlight disparities between their own trials and the Simpson case. No matter what one thinks of O.J. Simpson's guilt or innocence, it's hard to dispute that the well-heeled have a different day in court than workers or small farmers.

# —IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP—

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**WEST VIRGINIA: Morgantown:** 242 Walnut. Mailing address: P.O. Box 203. Zip: 26507. Tel: (304) 296-0055.

p.m. 147 East 900 South. Donation: Program \$3, dinner \$5. Tel: (801) 355-1124.

## WASHINGTON

### Seattle

**The Fight for Women's Rights Today: The 'Cultural War' and Women.** Speaker: Pat Grogan, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Steelworkers of America, and co-author of the Pathfinder pamphlet "Abortion Is a Woman's Right." Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 1405 E. Madison Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

## AUSTRALIA

### Sydney

**Communist League Election Campaign Rally.** Speaker: Bob Aiken, Communist League candidate for Caramatta in New South Wales state election. Sat., March 25, 6 p.m. *Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre*, corner Norton and Collins Sts. Donation: \$5. Tel: (02) 281 3297.

## CANADA

### Toronto

**The Truth About Socialist Cuba: Eyewitness Report from Four Participants in the International Youth Brigade.** Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. 827 Bloor St. W. (between Christie and Ossington. Donation: \$4. Tel: (416) 533-4324.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Auckland

**'The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara' - Celebration of the New Publication by Pathfinder.** Speaker: Helen Dee, Communist League. Sat., March 25, 7 p.m. *La Gonda Arcade*, 203 Karangahape Rd. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

# —CALENDAR—

## GEORGIA

### Atlanta

**Hear Cuban Youth Leaders on: Young People and Cuba Today.** Speakers: Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano, associate researchers at the Center of Studies for Youth in Havana. Sat., March 25, 7:30 p.m. Reception: 7 p.m. Little Five Points Community Center, 1083 Austin Ave., NE. (Corner of Austin Ave. and Euclid Ave.) *National tour sponsors: Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lectures Committee, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Local sponsor: Atlanta Network on Cuba. For more information, call: (404) 687-8323.*

## MISSOURI

### Unionville

**April 1 Rally. National Campaign to Save Family Farms and the Environment.** Sat., April 1, noon. *Lincoln Township in Unionville.* For more information, including directions, call: *Prairie Fire* (515) 244-5671 or *Missouri Rural Crisis Center* (314) 449-1336.

## AUSTRALIA

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## SWEDEN

**Stockholm:** Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33.



**The civilized society** — Alabama has the distinction of being the first state to reintroduce the chain gang. Prisoners in leg irons will pick up litter from roads. It's



Harry Ring

part of the governor's program to make prisons so unpleasant inmates won't want to come back.

**Bosses do tend to be practical** — Women constitute 67.3 percent of Russia's registered unemployed. One reported reason is that employers don't like paying maternity benefits. Valery Yanvariov, a Ministry of Labor official says, "When employers review the issue of reducing the number of workers in an enterprise...[they have] practical reasons for firing women."

**And he's all bone in both** — "A woman is all heart, even in her head."—Russian prez Boris Yeltsin in an International Women's Day tribute.

**Be well** — That Tampa, Florida, hospital where a doctor amputated the wrong foot of a surgery patient, has new rules. Wielding a felt-tip pen, staffers will write "No" on each limb not to be cut off. And, in an apparently revolutionary departure, the surgeon and head nurse must agree on what's to be done before any cutting.

**The caring society** — A report to Congress said that some 14 million children attend U.S. schools that are unsafe or unsuitable for use. Dangers to students include asbestos, lead contamination and rotting roof beams. It's been three

decades since the U.S. Education Dept. assessed the state of public schools.

**School lunch program** — At a New Orleans elementary school, termites ate books on the shelves, and the shelves too.

**And maybe a few more jobs** — According to a New Zealand press report, youth consultant Ian Grant contended that "New Zealand desperately needed fathers who are crazy about their children."

**'Deliberate speed'** — The Mississippi state senate voted

unanimously to ratify the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery. If the measure is approved by the House, Mississippi will be the last state to approve the 1865 action.

**Die with your boots on?** — Business is brisk at the Acton Rubber company in the Montreal area. The key, says the company prez, is superior research. Like, the recent order of 22,000 pairs of boots for the Australian army. The Australians wanted a boot, he said, "capable of resisting any infiltration of toxic gas." A research team assertedly developed such a boot.

## New Zealand meat bosses: profits before safety

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — The health and safety of meat processing workers in New Zealand is increasingly being put at risk as they bear the brunt of the meat bosses' drive to save the profitability of the crisis-ridden industry.

Meat is New Zealand's leading export earner, accounting for 21 percent of the country's total merchandise trade earnings, and is of central importance for New Zealand capital. Faced with growing competition, especially since the ratification of the Uruguay round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1994, the New Zealand meat employers are struggling to hang on to their traditional markets in North America and Europe, and newer ones in Asia and the Middle East, against traditional competitors in the United States, Europe, and Australia, and new rivals in India and South America.

At the same time they face a growing crisis of confidence from their major creditors — the banks and other lenders. As holders of more than \$1 billion of the industry's core debt, and the meat processors' de facto owners, they are increasingly worried about bearing most of the risk in an industry that they now regard as unprofitable. In November the meat indus-

try here narrowly avoided collapse when the banks threatened to withhold seasonal finance unless an industry stabilization plan was settled by the government.

### Banks worry over huge losses

A report commissioned by the National Bank last August showed that by the end of 1994, the meat industry would have accumulated losses of \$NZ380 million (\$NZ1.00=\$US0.63). And for three of the last four years, earnings would not have been enough to cover interest payments on the industry's debt. The report noted that lack of profitability and the inability to raise capital has meant that no investment has been made in research and development, marketing, and plant and machinery. Despite higher export prices and lower processing costs, the National Bank report commented that there was no sign of an end to an "ongoing severe lack of profitability."

For meat processing workers, the employers' lower processing costs have meant more layoffs and a continued chipping away at wages and working conditions. Nationally, the number of workers in the meat industry has declined from 34,000 in 1981 to 19,000. Many workers now receive lower pay with no premium

rates for overtime; and face a longer workday and workweek, an increased pace of work, and shift work.

Workers are paying a high price for these changes. At the Seaford plant in Ashburton, at least 26 accidents have been reported in the past two months, including a man almost severing two fingers and another stabbing himself in the stomach.

Seaford, previously owned by the Fortex company that went into receivership in March 1994 laying off 900 workers, was recently reopened by Canterbury Meat Packers with lower pay rates. Government Occupational Safety and Health inspectors, called in by the workers, found "no grounds for the concerns" and attributed them to over-exertion, workers incorrectly using their bodies, and momentary lapses of concentration.

### Working harder, faster, and longer

However, Maevis Watson, health and safety consultant for the Meat Workers Union, said sprains, strains, and over-use injuries were epidemic in the meat industry. He noted that "workers have to work harder, and faster, and longer. They have little say in how they use their bodies."

At the Auckland Abattoirs Ltd., workers are concerned about a series of accidents on the beef floor over the past three months.

Originally built as a small slaughterhouse to kill for the local market, the consortium that recently bought the plant is aiming to convert it into a substantial export works, while spending as little as possible to upgrade the aging plant and machinery. They were successful in introducing a new contract that allowed longer working hours and abolished special overtime pay.

Many workers point to the increased

throughput and heavier weights of the export carcasses as a factor in recent accidents.

A few months ago part of a large cast iron cog fractured and fell from the chain mechanism, narrowly missing an employee. Workers met and refused to return to the job until a guard was erected over this part of the chain.

Shortly afterwards on several occasions, entire beef carcasses fell to the floor when the metal skids, from which they are suspended as they move along the chain, snapped in half. A rushed repair job in which the skids were welded and then cooled rapidly in water, making them brittle, was blamed for the problem.

The most serious incident occurred when the shackling gear suspending a carcass, as well as the carcass itself, fell onto a young woman worker. She was knocked unconscious and required hospital treatment. At a union meeting called to discuss the incident, one newly hired older worker, who had been working next to the injured woman, refused to go back on the job. He explained that he had a family who depended on his income and he could not afford to risk his life or health in a job that was clearly dangerous.

Meanwhile, the government is tightening up access to state-funded accident compensation. Lump sum compensation for disability has been replaced by a minimal weekly allowance. Workers are now levied towards the cost of the scheme, and can be fined up to \$100,000 or imprisoned for up to a year for failing to ensure their own safety or causing harm to another person.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the Meat Workers Union at the Auckland Abattoirs Ltd.

## After four engine failures in flight, Air New Zealand grounds planes

BY COLIN PARKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — The sudden grounding February 17 of 10 out of 13 Boeing 737 aircraft operated by Air New Zealand, the major internal carrier, caused widespread disruption of air services for several weeks.

The grounding followed an engine failure in flight on February 16, which left pieces of debris scattered on the runway. It was the fourth such failure since June. All four failures occurred in aircraft newly fitted with reconditioned turbine blades and hushkits to reduce engine noise. Prior to these incidents, the last failure in flight was in 1985.

Air New Zealand is the only airline in the world to use the particular combination of hushkits and Pratt and Whitney JT8D-15A engines.

The hushkits were installed as airport authorities moved to curb aircraft noise, and followed the introduction by rival airline Ansett New Zealand of new, quieter

planes. It was considered a cheaper alternative than upgrading the airline fleet.

Air New Zealand's 737-200 fleet, purchased, in 1986, were among the last 200 series built by Boeing, and were subsequently banned from most major airports under international noise regulations.

Asked by Parliament's transport select committee why the aircraft had been permitted to continue flying after the third successive failure on February 5, Director of Civil Aviation Kevin Ward responded, "It was not considered that the aircrafts were at risk as such...the aircrafts are completely reliable and safe to fly on one engine."

It was only after the fourth failure that the Civil Aviation Authority decided "we had passed the point where we could have confidence in the reliability" of the fleet, Ward said.

Air New Zealand reported an after-tax profit of NZ\$140.5 million (U.S.\$88 million) for the six months to December.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

### THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People

March 27, 1970

Price 10¢

For the first time in nearly 50 years, International Women's Day was celebrated March 8 in cities around the U.S.

One of the most significant of these observances took place in Boston, where some 400 women attended a highly successful International Women's Day Teach-in at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The teach-in began March 6 with a talk on "How Women Lost Control of Their Destiny and How They Can Regain It" by Marxist anthropologist and women's liberation author Evelyn Reed.

The next morning a panel featured representatives from a broad spectrum of organizations in the Boston area including Bread and Roses, Female Liberation, National Organization for Women, the Young Socialist Alliance, and a new women's group which has submitted a position paper on abortion to the state legislature.

On March 8, the celebration of International Women's Day continued with a march of 500 women through the streets of Boston, each group with its own colorful banners and posters.

### THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

March 24, 1945

The independent actions of the insurgent masses against the Hitler regime are beginning to multiply throughout Germany, according to reports which have managed to seep through the double wall of Nazi and Allied censorship. This would indicate that the German workers revolution — the great hope of the toiling masses and all the poor peoples of Europe — has started to raise its head in the bomb-blasted cities of the Reich.

Huge anti-war strikes have broken out in Bremen. Beginning in the munitions industry on the outskirts of the city, the strikes quickly spread to the shipyards and other industries in the city proper. The strikers paraded up and down Bremen's streets shouting "Down with the war! Down with Hitler! Down with the Nazis!" When SS troops tried to disperse the demonstrators bloody clashes ensued in which the workers fought back with arms as well as bare hands. The German youth, brought up and educated under the Nazi regime, are infected with the rebellion moods sweeping through the country. An 18 year old member of an anti-aircraft gun crew was quoted as saying that 60 per cent of the boys in his outfit ranging from the ages of 15 to 18, are against the Hitler regime and many have deserted.

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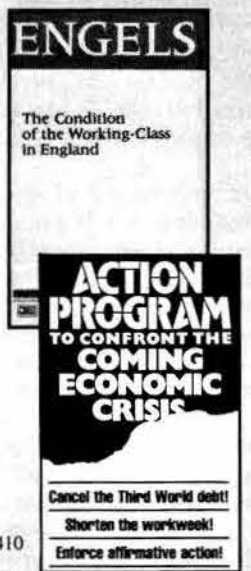
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## Rally for abortion rights April 9

The April 9 rally in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the National Organization for Women and backed by scores of national organizations and prominent individuals, is an opportunity to mobilize supporters of women's rights and stand up against recent attacks on abortion clinics. The rally will highlight four demands: Stop all violence against women, stop antiabortion violence, stop the war on poor women, and stop the Contract on America.

After the murders of two clinic workers in the Boston area, demonstrations and speak-outs were organized there and across the country that helped to further divide antiabortion forces and isolate rightist groups who employ violence to deny women a right to choose. Majority support for abortion rights among all sectors of society continues to be the reality in spite of the best efforts of many politicians and rightist forces. Even the Republican Party is shaken up over the issue, as some of its members recently staged a rebellion over a bill to cut federal funding for some abortions.

Actions like April 9, where supporters of abortion rights mobilize in the streets, are the most effective way to drive back the unceasing attempts to deny women their rights. The battle to defend the clinics and to keep abortion safe and legal is far from over, as can be seen from the recent arson attacks on five California clinics and the attempt by a landlord in Long Island, New York, to evict an abortion clinic because of threats from antiabortion protesters.

## Workers have no stake in fish wars

The trade war that erupted between the Canadian government and those of the European Union over which group of big capitalist fishing companies will grab the lion's share of fish in international waters in the North Atlantic Ocean is the latest sign of accelerating tensions gripping world capitalism.

Contrary to the claim by Canada's fisheries minister Brian Tobin, this conflict has nothing to do with "conservation" of the environment and everything to do with dollars, pesetas, francs, and escudos. On both sides of the dispute lie the sharply competing interests of the very same big fishing companies in Canada, Spain, Portugal, and other imperialist countries that have overfished numerous ocean regions over the last quarter century in a frenzied search for profits.

The hypocritical posturing of the Canadian government and big business is especially striking in the current dispute. Since 1977, Canadian capitalists, backed by the government, were responsible for most of the overfishing that led to the 1992 collapse of the industry off Canada's coast.

As the news article published elsewhere in this issue of the *Militant* explains, tens of thousands of small fishermen, fishery workers, and entire communities have been devastated over the last few years by the collapse of the fishing industry and are now living in depression conditions both in Canada and Europe. All the governments involved in the current dispute are using flag-waving, chauvinist rhetoric to deal blows to their rivals

and divert attention from their own responsibility for the current crisis.

This is why any support given by union officials to the governments' chauvinist campaigns sets the labor movement up for disaster. It ties the fishery workers to the very same capitalists whose drive for profits provoked the current crisis and whose trade wars can lead to more disastrous consequences for the working class.

The only alternative is international working-class solidarity. The labor movement should demand that the capitalist governments provide immediate relief to fishery workers on both sides of the Atlantic and should oppose any cuts in the already meager existing programs. They should provide jobs at union wages to the devastated fishing communities through massive public works programs to rebuild badly needed housing, schools, hospitals, public transportation, and other social facilities.

Our unions must lead the fight for a shorter workweek with no pay cuts to create jobs, and a sliding scale of hours and wages to protect workers against the combined effects of inflation and unemployment. The labor movement should also speak out against armed naval harassment of fishermen in international waters.

Only by standing together as oppressed and exploited the world over can we begin to defend our class and build the kind of fighting movement able to take the political power out of the exploiters' hands and stop their accelerating march toward war.

## Nuclear waste, capitalist legacy

If ever a reminder was needed that environmental destruction is inherent to capitalism's profit drive a brief review of news from the past few weeks should suffice. Nuclear waste, including material from continuing weapons production, is piling up at sites around the United States. There is nowhere to put the deadly debris that comes as a byproduct of the U.S. government's war drive and of the nuclear industry's profit drive. So they just plan to bury the stuff and hope that any big disaster can be passed on to future generations.

But the true scale of the mounting horror has begun to alarm even government-paid scientists. The federal government has been pushing ahead with plans to open a repository for nuclear waste deep under Yucca Mountain, 100 miles northwest of Las Vegas. After spending \$1.7 billion dollars to study the question, it occurred to some of the scientists at the Los Alamos National Laboratory that packing away radioactive material with a half-life of 24,360 years might pose an insurmountable problem.

The steel containers holding the material will dissolve long before the danger has passed. And plutonium seeping into porous rock could set off a chain reaction leading to an atomic explosion.

While other scientists at Los Alamos were quickly dispatched to disprove the theory, they could not conclusively rule out the danger posed.

Meanwhile, an initial plan to deal with the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, where for 50 years the U.S. government produced plutonium for bombs, has not even begun to address serious permanent clean up. The site has extensive soil and water contamination and large

amounts of waste stored in aging, rusting metal containers. This waste is part of what the government hoped it could eventually store at Yucca Mountain.

The hunt for temporary storage sites for the growing mass of atomic waste brought the representatives of good government to the doorstep of the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico. After years of herding native Americans into ghetto conditions on the reservations with few jobs, poor education, and few social services, the reservations have suddenly been discovered by those selling gambling houses and nuclear waste storage as the way to get ahead in life. By dangling \$250 million in possible benefits supporters of the waste storage plan finally succeeded in pushing through an agreement to dump the stuff on Mescalero land. This is supposed to be temporary, only 40 years, after which this waste, too, may end up under Yucca Mountain.

Destruction of the environment, and the use of science, are class questions. Capitalism destroys the environment, and it distorts science as it seeks rationalizations to justify its wars for domination and profit. The labor movement should expose the facts in the nuclear debacle, and point out the heavier weight borne by the working class, especially oppressed nationalities whose neighborhoods end up with more waste dumps and incinerators.

Capitalist politicians say we have to accept these horrors, since they come along with "defending our country." But we should say no to their wars, their weapons and their nuclear plants. It's not "our country" workers are being asked to defend, it's "their profits."

## Washington nixes Conoco-Iran deal

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Bowing to intense pressure from the White House, Conoco Inc. scrapped a \$1 billion deal with the Iranian government to develop two offshore oil fields in the Persian Gulf. The decision came after President Bill Clinton said he would issue an executive order barring such ventures with Tehran. Administration spokesperson Michael McCurry said Clinton was opposed to the Iranian regime developing "a substantial new capacity for oil production."

"American oil companies are pursuing their own foreign policy with Iran, in defiance of United States interests," complained the *New York Times* editors on March 11. "It should not be too much to ask American corporations to put the country's interest ahead of their own in a case where the potential threat to national security is so clear."

Conoco, a subsidiary of E.I. duPont de Nemours & Co., announced its agreement with Iran March 6, after three years of negotiations. The pact was the first time since the 1979 Iranian revolution, which overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of the Shah, that a major American company was ready to invest a large sum of capital into a business venture in Iran.

But the U.S. oil giant's plan ran afoul of Washington's increasing concern over Iran's growing economic and political influence in the gulf region. Last year Clinton vehemently though unsuccessfully opposed Iran's membership in an \$8 billion oil consortium, which included several major capitalist competitors of the United States, in nearby Azerbaijan.

There was nothing illegal about Conoco's deal with Iran. Current U.S. law bars imports of Iranian products into the United States, but oil companies can ship Iranian oil to refineries in Europe or Asia and pocket the profits. In fact, U.S. companies are among the largest buyers of Iranian oil. Last year they bought \$4 billion of Iranian oil through their foreign subsidiaries.

There are some divisions over administration policy. U.S. Treasury and Commerce department officials have argued against a trade embargo on Iran, stating that it would disrupt oil markets and hurt U.S. businesses. "It won't accomplish anything," said Lawrence Goldstein, president of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation. "French and German companies are standing in line to get their hands on this deal."

## Sinn Fein leader's tour angers London

Continued from front page

Clinton will have to answer over the next 18 months, that of ignoring British views will be one that does him the least political damage."

Where interests diverge, Washington has always been prepared to push ahead regardless.

In fact, important U.S. interests are at stake in Ireland. In the Irish Republic, where a government spokesperson welcomed the decision to invite Adams to the United States, U.S. corporations have been the biggest gainers out of foreign capital penetration over the last 30 years. Of the 986 foreign firms operating there in 1990, when figures were last available, 357 had their home base in the United States compared to 225 in the United Kingdom.

Britain has been losing out in Ireland to its capitalist rivals in trade as well as investment. In 1922, 80 percent of Irish trade was with Britain. Today the figure is 30 percent.

In Northern Ireland, too, U.S.-based multi-nationals account for the largest share of foreign capital penetration. Of the 58 foreign corporations operating there in 1990, 30 were from the United States.

U.S. capital has its own interest in backing what has become known as the "peace process." It sees Ireland as an entry point into the market of the European Union and as providing an opportunity to exploit cheap labor. Ruling circles in the United States favor the most rapid removal of obstacles to the development of capitalism in Ireland, encouraging the development of all-Ireland trade and the construction of an all-Ireland infrastructure.

While all major capitalist interests endorse the "peace process," they are under different pressures as to how to move it forward.

London is concerned to do so in such a way that doesn't undermine the fragile cohesion of the United Kingdom, a state of four countries — Britain, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales — with the Queen of England as its constitutional head.

Prime Minister Major is now facing the first serious opposition to his Irish policy. Thirty Tory members of Parliament — more than a tenth of all conservative backbenchers — reportedly intend to sign a House of Commons motion attacking the government's plan for a minister to meet Sinn Fein before large quantities of IRA arms have been decommissioned.



# Paperworkers strike against longer workweek

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or

MBI plants in Montreal, who are also members of the CEP, are refusing to work overtime as a show of opposition to the seven-day schedule and of support to the strikers in Toronto.

MBI has 11 factories across Canada.

Company demands for the seven-day, 12-hour schedule spread throughout the cardboard packaging industry beginning last year. Most factories in the indus-

Supreme Court judge axed a public inquiry into the explosion after the provincial government had been pressured into calling one. One month later, 34 charges filed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act were dropped by provincial government prosecutors. Another 18 were dropped in March 1993.

The explosion has been a political scandal for the Canadian and Nova Scotia governments. Permits to open the mine in the first place were granted despite widespread concern by residents and former coal miners about safety. The coalfield on which the mine sits has a long history of deadly methane gas explosions.

In the days following the mine blast, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) blocked access to the mine site, including to family members who were waiting on site for news of survivors, and to journalists and other concerned residents. News reports, citing anonymous sources among Westray office personnel, exposed an extensive document shredding operation launched by the company.

Testimony by Westray miners in television documentaries and newspaper reports both before and after the explosion revealed extensive violations of coal mining safety procedures. The reports laid bare the threats and intimidation used by Parry, Phillips, and other managers against miners who protested the unsafe conditions. The United Mine Workers of America lost a union representation vote shortly after the mine opened.

Not until five months after the blast did the RCMP seize control of the mine site and begin forensic examinations underground. Crim-

try are unionized and as a result of industry-wide bargaining during past decades, workers have won comparable wages, benefits, and working conditions. But there has not been a united fight by the different unions in the industry against the companies' scheduling demands.

The 12-hour and weekend schedule was accepted last year at the MBI factory in Guelph, Ontario, and the Domtar Packaging factory in Toronto.

## Coal mine managers go on trial for manslaughter

On February 6 the trial of two managers began in the town of Pictou, Nova Scotia, almost three years after a methane gas explosion at the Westray coal mine took the lives of 26 miners.

Former Westray mine managers Gerald Phillips and Roger Parry face charges of manslaughter and criminal negligence. The mine owner, Curragh Resources, is also charged. The company went bankrupt following the explosion and is not represented at the trial.

For the families of the dead miners, the fact that the trial is taking place at all is a political victory. They have fought for a public inquiry into the cause of the explosion and for criminal charges against those responsible.

Twenty family members were on hand opening day. "We're glad this is starting," said Brian Gillis. His brother Myles was killed in the blast.

The families' fight has been blocked at every step by government and police officials. In November 1992, a Nova Scotia



Striking nurses picket Sisters of Mercy Hospital in Port Jervis, New York. The nurses won their demands for union recognition, improved wages and benefits. Militant/George Chalmers

## ON THE PICKET LINE

other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

One hundred forty-eight members of the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), walked out at the Macmillan Bathurst Inc. (MBI) cardboard packaging factory in Toronto February 21. Strikers are opposing the employer's attempt to lengthen the workweek and eliminate weekends off.

The company wants to impose a seven-day, 12-hour shift operation. An overtime premium of time and a half would be paid for Sunday only. Presently, the workweek runs from Monday through Friday with three rotating eight-hour shifts per day. The new schedule would increase the average workweek from 40 to 42 hours.

The company is demanding that workers be required to remain at their job for an additional two hours if their replacement on the subsequent shift does not show up for work. MBI also wants break time to be limited to one 20-minute lunch break and two 10-minute coffee breaks.

"We fought to reduce the work day from 10 hours down to eight," said striker James Yantha as he walked the picket line. "Now the bosses want us to work 12 hours. Things are going backwards....they think we are slaves."

Workers at other MBI plants are following news of the strike in Toronto. In three other plants in Ontario and two in Montreal, workers are without a contract and are facing the same scheduling demands.

Most of the 320 workers at the

inal charges were finally laid in April 1993.

The trial, expected to last six months, has been delayed by numerous appeals by the accused. Parry and Phillips chose to be tried by a judge, rather than a jury.

## Mercy nurses win pact after six months on strike

Nurses at Mercy Community Hospital in Port Jervis, New York, won their first contract in early March after a six-month strike. The nurses, who are members of Local 1199 National Health and Human Services Employees Union, gained a three-year agreement which stipulates no layoffs for nurses with five or more years of service, four wage increases of 4 percent each over the life of the contract, and no increase in health-care premiums for the life of the contract.

The strike was called in September 1994, 10 months after the nurses voted for union representation. Once the walkout began the hospital brought in replacement workers and withdrew

recognition of the union on December 15.

Local 1199 Mercy nurses picketed the hospital every day and gathered support from a number of unions throughout the United States.

Unable to break the resolve of the strikers, the Sisters of Mercy, sponsors of the hospital, expanded the board of directors. With a new majority the board voted to recognize Local 1199 and proceed with serious negotiations and a settlement.

"We were not only fighting for our right to a contract, but for respect for ourselves as working people who help society, and respect for ourselves as individuals who deserve a say in our work environment," said Kathy Osowick, a registered nurse who has worked at Mercy since 1971.

Contributors to this week's column include: Roger Annis, a member of CEP Local 841 at the Mount Royal Macmillan Bathurst factory in Montreal and Sedi Minachi, a member of CEP Local 521 in Toronto.

## LETTERS

### Cops and rightists

I was interested in your report that the Canadian Security Intelligence Service employed an informer, Grant Bristow, who founded and helped lead a white supremacist organization. It reminded me of something similar I'd read from a period when the class struggle was more intense than it is at present.

The book *Who Financed Hitler* by James and Suzanne Pool says, "On September 12, 1919, with orders from his commanding officer, Hitler attended a political meeting of a group called the German Workers' Party in Munich's Sterneckerbrau beer hall. His mission was to report back on what was said, because the Reichswehr [army], which was very inquisitive about politics, wanted to have more exact information about the little group which seemed to be 'well intentioned.'"

While still employed by the army as a political agent, Hitler met Capt. Ernst Roehm, the officer in charge of press and propaganda for the army in Bavaria and head of the Iron Fist, an ultrarightist group of soldiers. Roehm recruited soldiers and officers to the German Workers' Party and made



army resources available to it.

Later the party changed its name to National Socialist German Workers' Party on Hitler's proposal. They were known as Nazis for short. Roehm became head of its street-fighting organization, the brown shirts.

Chris Morris  
Manchester, England

### Budget Amendment

The March 13 *Militant* article "Bank collapse spotlights fragility of capitalism" quotes a March 6 *Business Week* article by Christopher Farrell on the so-called Balanced Budget Amendment: "The amendment, he writes, 'would strip away much of the government spending that cushions the

economy in hard times — just when disinflation and the prospect of deflation are raising the odds of financial crises.'"

But doesn't the proposed amendment just raise the percentage of the House and Senate vote required to go over the budget on a particular item from one-half to three-fifths? Rep. John Conyers, Democrat from Michigan, (and echoed by Sen. Patrick Moynihan, Democrat from New York) says of the amendment, if passed, "Recessions would rapidly turn into depressions as Congress stood by helplessly."

Leaving aside how much the economy is "cushioned in hard times" it is difficult to 1) imagine that Congress could be much

more helpless (or hopeless) with or without an amendment or 2) agree with Conyers that it is the amendment that would turn recessions into depressions.

Janet Post  
Miami, Florida

### Airmail sub to Germany

Just curious how much an airmail sub to Germany for 12 weeks would run. Our DePauw Progressive Network political group back at home campus subscribed, or at least I think they did, but since I'm studying abroad I'm only seeing sporadic e-mail versions of some of the articles.

By the way, have you all been keeping up on the impending metal workers strike in Germany?

That's pretty big news here but even the moderately leftist papers like *Die Tageszeitung* seem to be treating it like management's problem more than what the workers are angry about.

Jason Trudell  
Germany

Editor's note: An airmail subscription to *Continental Europe* costs 40£. See the business information box on page two for more details.

### The truth about Cuba

Enclosed is a \$10 donation towards the *Militant* paper so that I can continue to receive the truth about Cuba and what's going on with the rest of the world. Thanks a lot for supporting me with the *Militant* over the years and I wish you continued success.

A prisoner  
Woodbury, New York

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.



## N. Atlantic fishing war breaks out

### Capitalists in Canada, Europe mount chauvinist campaign over fishing stocks

BY ROGER ANNIS

MONTREAL — Competition for dwindling fish stocks off Canada's east coast burst into sharp conflict March 9 when Ottawa seized a Spanish fishing trawler in international waters just outside Canada's 200-mile maritime limit.

Armed officers boarded the fishing trawler *Estai* after a four-hour chase by armed Canadian Coast Guard and fisheries department ships. The fishermen surrendered after four 50mm machine gun rounds were fired across the bow of their ship. "We decided to let them board so as not to risk the crew's safety," captain Enrique Davila told a Spanish newspaper.

The ship's owner and the captain are charged with one count of violating the Canadian Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, a recent law in which the Canadian government unilaterally declared jurisdiction over fish stocks lying outside its waters, and three counts of obstructing justice for attempting to avoid arrest.

In response to the seizure, the governments grouped in the European Union (EU) froze all formal contacts with the Canadian government. The EU announced it is drawing up a list of diplomatic and economic sanctions against Ottawa that will be applied if the *Estai* is not released and charges are not dropped.

A surge of jingoism and flag-waving filled news reports and government declarations in the days preceding and following the seizure. Canadian prime minister Jean Chrétien said he personally gave fisheries officers the authority to fire warning shots.

Union officials from the Newfoundland Food, Fish, and Allied Workers Union joined in the chauvinist campaign, calling a rally to support the government's action. Thousands of fishermen demonstrated along the harbourfront of St. John's, the capital of Newfoundland province, to

cheer the arrival of the seized vessel on March 12. A few hours after the rally, a small crowd of demonstrators jeered the ship's captain as he was led onto shore by police. European diplomats who had flown into St. John's to protest the seizure, accompanied the captain and were jostled by the crowd.

#### Capitalist trade conflict

The dispute centers over the allocation of quotas of the turbot fish species, also known as Greenland halibut. On February 1, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) set a total of 27,000 tons on this year's catch.

Only 12 percent of the catch was allocated to countries in Europe, in this case Spain and Portugal, while 60 percent was given to Canada. The commission justified its decision by the fact that the fish stocks lie within and along Canadian coastal waters.

NAFO is made up of the countries that fish in the North Atlantic. Its purported goal is to manage fish stocks.

Following the decision, the EU invoked an "objection clause" in the NAFO charter that allows member countries to reject quota decisions and set their own catch limits. It said it agreed with the overall quota, but rejected the allocation and set a quota of 19,000 tons for Spain and Portugal.

Commercial interest in turbot has been limited until recently. But overfishing off Canada's east coast, primarily by Cana-



March 12 rally in St. John's, Newfoundland, was called to support Ottawa's chauvinist campaign over fishing rights.

dian and also European fishing companies has decimated the more lucrative groundfish species (so-called because they feed near the bottom of the relatively shallow waters off Canada's east coast) — such as cod, sole, and haddock — and other species such as salmon.

Fifty thousand fishermen and fish processing workers in Canada, and thousands in Europe, were thrown out of work when the fishing industry collapsed in 1992. In that year, the Canadian government declared a moratorium on the fishing of northern cod, the principal species. Moratoriums on other species followed. NAFO member countries agreed to abide by the bans.

The Canadian government was stung by the collapse because it is responsible for the management of the fish stocks. Canadian fish companies, encouraged and financed by the government, took the lion's share of the catch, especially following 1977 when an international agreement extended the control of maritime countries over their coastal waters from 12 to 200 miles. Government officials repeatedly ignored the warnings of small fishermen that stocks were being overfished.

#### Temporary relief

The government was forced to institute a special program paying hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation to those thrown out of work. But Ottawa has always contended that the payments were temporary. It is now threatening to end them as part of its campaign to reduce spending on social programs.

The cutback plan was facing growing opposition in Newfoundland, where 30,000 fishery workers are out of work. Many of them live in remote villages along the coast that depend entirely on the fishery. An end to the special program would mean deeper impoverishment and forced relocation for many.

Ottawa has tried to use its war-like actions on the high seas to divert attention from its responsibility for the desperate situation facing many working people in

the eastern maritime provinces.

The Canadian government has for years tried to blame its European competitors for the destruction of the fishery. The seizure of the *Estai* followed a warning delivered March 6 to the governments of Spain and Portugal to cease fishing in the disputed area. Some 50 vessels from the two countries were fishing there.

The two governments sharply protested the warning and the subsequent arrest and said they would continue to fish. The Spanish government accused Ottawa of "a flagrant violation of international law."

Madrid dispatched two naval vessels to the area to protect its fishing fleet. Portuguese television reports that the government there has also dispatched several naval vessels.

Trawlers from Spain caught \$100 million of fish off the Canadian coast in 1994. One thousand full time and 11,000 seasonal workers are employed in catching and then processing it in Spain.

#### 'Angel of conservation'

The fish companies and capitalist politicians in Canada have draped their reactionary campaign in the mantle of "environmental protection." Newspapers have dubbed federal Fisheries Minister Brian Tobin the "avenging angel of conservation."

"This was not a confrontation on the high seas," Tobin told an interviewer on the day after the seizure of the *Estai*. "I call it conservation on the high seas."

But in the midst of its campaign in the Atlantic, the government was rocked by a report on another fishery disaster it helped create, this one on the west coast.

A commission established by the government to study the \$450 million salmon fishery there sharply criticized the government and the fishing industry for the precipitous decline of salmon fish stocks. It said that incompetence by the federal Ministry of Fisheries nearly led to the extinction of the Adams River salmon run, the most important salmon stock on the west coast of North America, in 1994.

There was serious overfishing of salmon in 1994 because of an ongoing dispute over quotas between Canadian and U.S. fishing companies. Tobin and his department urged Canadian fishermen to haul in as much as their nets could grab during the southward migration of the salmon in order to reduce the catch available to the fishing companies in the U.S. northwest and thereby pressure them to accept lower quotas.

Although Ottawa has managed, for now, to mute criticism of its actions, some dissenting voices are being raised against the government's actions.

Owen Myers, a lawyer who specializes in maritime law and a former inspector of the federal fisheries department, told the Montreal *La Presse* on March 10, "What we are seeing at the moment is a public relations maneuver that is particularly hypocritical. Its purpose is to cover up the years of incompetence on the part of Fisheries and Oceans Canada."

"It also serves," Myers explained, "to cover up other stupidities, quasi-criminal, which they have perpetrated in order to please the owners of the largest fishing vessels."

Roger Annis is a member of Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada Local 841 in Montreal.

## Drought and credit squeeze hit small farmers in New Zealand

BY TERRY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — The effects of drought conditions in many parts of New Zealand are likely to be with farmers long after the rain comes. The East Coast of the North Island, which has been the region hardest hit, is expected to have a 28 percent drop in net farm income for the 1994-95 season.

Hawkes Bay sheep and cattle farmer Tony Powdrell described to the February 11 *Daily Telegraph* the impact the drought is having on him. Usually he sends lambs for slaughter at 15 kilograms (33 pounds), but this year he has had to destock as quickly as possible, so they went out the gate at 12-13 kilograms. He has been forced to graze cattle out of the area until the end of February at a cost of NZ\$15,000 (NZ\$1.00=US\$0.63). His hayshed, which at this time of year should be stocked with 4,500 bales of newly cut hay to be used for winter feed (May to September), is empty as there has been no rain for grass growth.

The government has not provided assistance to farmers. None has been sought by Federated Farmers, the biggest farmers organization, which is dominated by larger, capitalist farmers. Its past president, Owen Jennings, told the January 7 *Daily Telegraph*, "The drought will be hard on individual families, farms and communities...but don't expect to see the begging bowls come out." Farmers had accepted that they were involved in a business like any other, and were not entitled to special favors from society, he said.

The drought isn't the only reason for working farmers' lower incomes. Increased interest rates are expected to raise

loan-servicing costs by an average NZ\$2,300 per farm in the current season. Coupled with this, farmers are receiving lower prices from meat processing companies for their lamb, sheep, and cattle.

Developments around the collapse of the Weddel meat company have helped clarify what capitalist spokespeople mean when they talk of "over-capacity" in the meat industry. Weddel closed its six plants last August, leaving 3,000 meat workers jobless. A consortium of other meat companies put in a bid to buy the plants with the declared purpose of closing them permanently, thereby putting themselves in a stronger position to dictate prices by reducing competition for farmers' stock.

The Commerce Commission, a government body which is supposed to prevent monopolies from developing in the economy, approved the bid and the sale was completed. The farmers group Aorangi-Fielding Promotions is appealing the commission's decision. Spokesperson Harvey Bell told the February 15 *New Zealand Herald* there was widespread anger among farmers that the consortium had been given the go-ahead. "All the bad things they feared from the bid are being demonstrated," he said. There was "grossly reduced" competition for stock, farmers were being paid lower prices, and having trouble getting their stock killed.

At the height of the drought, the consortium refused to open any of the Weddel plants to alleviate the shortage of killing space caused by farmers trying to destock their farms.

Terry Coggan is a member of the Meat Workers Union in Auckland.